

A  
DOUBLE WEDDING

OR  
HOW SHE WAS WON.

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BY  
MRS. C. A. WARFIELD.



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MRS. C. A. WARFIELD.

AUTHOR OF

"THE HOUSEHOLD OF BOUVERIE."

*"She bids me hope, and in that charming word  
Has peace and transport to my soul returned."*—LYTTLETON.

*"Why did she love him? curious fool be still—  
Is human love the growth of human will?"*—BYRON.

*"My joy—my best beloved—my only wish.  
How can I speak the transport of my soul?"*—ADDISON.

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## CHAPTER I.

"Gazing—the one on all that was beneath,  
Fair as herself—but the boy gazed upon her.  
And both were young—yet not alike in years—  
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart  
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye  
There was but one bright face on earth,  
And that was shining on him."

THEY sat on the broad tessellated umbra that enclosed the library of Birk-braes, a towered and graceful structure, built in the Italian style, and gazed—she on the setting sun, splendid with its purple and crimson pall of clouds, and he on her, likewise declining orb, if the beauty and freshness of young maidenhood be all worthy of the name of youth.

Mrs. Thermor, however, was far from old, as the word goes, though the widowed mother of children nearly grown up. Beautiful in youth, she was still beautiful

in matronhood, and retained many of the perfections of earlier life in undiminished splendor.

The man who seemed by the ardor of his gaze literally to drink in her beauty, was younger than herself by a decade of years—and, as far as one could observe on first acquaintance, was of the type called “pleasing,” merely being gentlemanly in appearance, graceful in bearing, and only passably good-looking. But those who knew him better, and, so knowing, liked him more, in time assigned to him a charm entirely lost on strangers, and declared his face to be one of those rare ones which grow into positive beauty on intimate inspection. Very shy rather than reserved, yet entirely free from the “*mauvais honte*” which is the result rather of an overestimate of self than want of “*usage du monde*.”

The evidences of feeling and intelligence which informed and rendered interesting his aspect, were slow to unveil themselves; but the mask of frost once lifted, the nature beneath was found to be gay and genial, and the manner and voice that interpreted it singularly sweet and graceful. Good-breeding had set its indelible signet on these as well as on his person and bearing, yet it was difficult to imagine how this had been acquired.

In his role of artist, struggling and scarcely yet successful, he had seen nothing worth the name of good society, if we except one man of genius who now and then *en passant* extended to him a hand of good fellowship or cordial recognition.

And yet Bohemianism was a style of life from which his nicer instincts shrank; though in its confederacy he was prized as a spirit singularly sympathetic and true; and generous even to Quixotism in the cause of others.

Yet, after rendering an important service, he often shrank from its object thereafter; dreading, perhaps, even more, with his fastidious organization, some noisy manifestation of gratitude than the necessity of repeated exertion.

There might have been a grain of selfishness in this peculiarity of his nature; but we are not painting perfection, and while we are upon the subject of his faults, it may be as well to confess that from his very want of conceit and self-praise, he was open to flattery, and frequently victimized through this weakness by the designing of both sexes, much to his own ultimate disgust.

He was of pure American descent, and had gentle blood in his veins on both sides, of a good old Virginia strain, but, orphaned early, he had been left to the guardianship of an expatriated uncle, who made Paris his home, and lived on his liberal income in faultless apartments in an old palace of St. Germaine, surrounded with gardens and gay parterres and box and cedar trees—the delight of Mazon—trimmed into all manner of fantastic shapes.

By this relative young Rivers had been well trained and educated, and indulgently suffered, as he emerged from boyhood and was supposed to know his own vocation, to adopt the artist's profession, for which he imagined himself singularly fitted by nature.

On this subject some doubts had recently crept in, it must be acknowledged, not only on his own part but on that of his devoted relative, who found himself suddenly deprived in his old age of all but a very small portion of his revenue, through the failure of an important banking house in which he was a silent partner, and who

measured success very materially in his poverty and as he had not done in his days of affluence, as the most disinterested among us all are apt to do.

"You might have been a man of fortune by this time," he said on his death-bed, "had I possessed the strength to thwart your inclinations, my Mazon, and compelled you to embark in commerce or to study a profession. As it is you are doomed to poverty and mediocrity all your days—you have not the true afflatus."

The words sank drearily on the conscious ear of the young man (who hung mournfully above the pillow of the only near relative he had ever known since his parents left him desolate), and took conviction home with them.

"You are right," he murmured; "I have only the hands of genius—not its eyes—the hand which at its best is mechanical, mere talent, and the Promethean fire is wanting in my organization. My groove will be an humble one I know, but it is too late to leave it, and I must persevere in the path of life I have marked out, whether to success or failure. You know I have no versatility, uncle, only the power to proceed; so bless and pity your poor imbecile, and wish him at least 'God speed.'"

"My best—my noblest!" faltered the old man, who felt rebuked and disarmed by such patient humility, and who loved his nephew as few fathers love their sons.

A few days terminated their mournful intercourse; and after the handsome funeral was over, and a memorial-stone carved for the grave in Pere la Chaise, ordered and promptly paid for, Mazon Rivers found himself

the possessor of one thousand francs per annum, some antiquated furniture, handsome but unsalable, and a few good books and pictures which no money could have bought as long as he could procure bread and raiment. He was living very frugally on this (for his art brought him barely enough to meet his rent) when one day came his old acquaintance, Madame Burgenheim, with a proposition on the part of the Countess Cluche that he should go to America, with all expenses defrayed, and paint four members of her family residing there, at one thousand five hundred francs each, for the picture-gallery she was forming at her chateau in Provence, "Les Hironnelles."

At first an honest doubt as to his capacity to fill these orders crossed the mind of Mazon Rivers, and made him hesitate to accept an offer so inviting—for to visit America had long been his day-dream and earnest wish rather than hope. But when Madame Burgenheim distinctly stated that it was in consequence of such specimens of his art as had fallen under her observation, as well as the fact that he, like herself, was partly-American, that this offer had been made by her friend and patroness, the Countess Cluche—who had lately, he knew, after a somewhat stormy youth, succeeded to her father's title and estates—he deemed himself no longer self-justified in declining the noble proposition.

Thus it is accounted for how Mazon Rivers, a perfect stranger to Mrs. Thermor (the aunt of the Countess Cluche), had, when we first beheld them on the umbra, been already domesticated a fortnight at "Birk-braes," for the purpose of painting the lovely lady who resided there, and her pretty daughter Eugenie, for her French

relative—now first introducing herself to their closer acquaintance by an act of gracious interest and affection.

The ice had been broken, it is true, a few months earlier by Mrs. Thermor herself, who wrote rather formally to know if it lay in the power of the Countess Cluche to recommend to her a proper governess for her daughter, from whom she could not bear the idea of being separated. Her two elder children were sons—one in the navy, another at West Point. She saw them just often enough to mark the rapid changes from childhood to youth, from youth to budding manhood, so that they might not wholly outgrow her maternal recognition, and she came at last to look upon them as not very widely different from panoramic pictures suddenly presented and as suddenly withdrawn, or mere animated dissolving scenes.

But Eugenie was a different matter altogether. The touch of those soft hands, the light of those sweet eyes, the sound of that delicious voice and ringing laugh, were quite as important to the daily well-being of her mother as the air she breathed or the water she drank. A boarding-school for Eugenie, indeed! the very thought was desecration, and yet to procure a suitable and proper French governess—the desideratum—speaking pure Parisian, moral and with all the accomplishments, was an achievement she had hitherto found perfectly unattainable.

She had reason so far to be perfectly contented with Mademoiselle Marie Minande, the young person who, without further correspondence, had presented herself very suddenly one day with credentials from her trans-Atlantic noble relative.



"She is a good little thing," ran the Countess' letter of introduction, "and has been trained in a hard school, therefore well brought up. Her natural capacity exceeds her attainments, I think. But she speaks and writes pure French, and, as far as I know, is true and honorable, and I know her pretty well. As to her manner, 'quant a ces mannièras,' you must judge for yourself—they are not distinguished, certainly, and she has some little odd ways that are not altogether pleasant, even to me, who am inclined to be indulgent toward her peculiarities. But she is a favorite with Madame Burgenheim, my dear old governess, and this is much in her praise, according to my simple opinion. Try her for four months, and, if you do not like her at the end of that time, I will remove her at my own expense. One of her objects in going to America is to learn English, which she will do in all its pristine purity in your family, I cannot doubt; and 'ainsi,' the matter of salary is not very important to her, so that it includes independence. Perhaps I may be with you myself in the autumn, partly in the hope of persuading you, my dear mother's only surviving sister, to return with me to 'Les Hirondelles,' and complete Eugenie's education in one of our sweet, safe, cavernous provincial convents, where mothers feel that their young doves are cherished and protected, as they can be in no other seminaries, by the patient, pious, and accomplished nuns, earth's angels in human guise, as I believe."

The letter was signed "E. M. R., Countess Cluche," which initials Mrs. Thermor readily interpreted to stand for Eugenie Marie Ruffin, the name, she knew, of her aunt's eldest daughter.

"I never knew which of the sisters it was that died until now," she murmured, as she scrutinized the accompanying miniature, beautiful as a portrait and as a work of art, painted on ivory and with the name "Eugenie" inscribed on the back, beyond which there was no reference to its identity. "There were two of them—one plain and one handsome—so as this is an exquisite face, it belonged, of course, to the elder; besides, isn't there her name on the other side? I cannot doubt, however, that it was taken years ago. See how old the fashion of her dress is, and she no doubt is quite passé by this time, like all old maids, though very little older than I am, if so old! There, let me think, aunt was married before I was born to the Count Cluche, a perfect 'Robert le Diable' of a man, if accounts be true, and this was their first child; then came the son who died; then another daughter, during whose infancy poor aunt was relieved of her doleful captivity at 'Les Hirondelles' by the gentle hand of death!

"The song now so much in vogue no doubt originated about that dreary old chateau. 'When the swallows homeward fly,'" humming it carelessly. "What a wail it has with it to be sure—like the night winds in September, blowing off the marshes. I never can see what people admire in such doleful ditties," and she shook her magnificent curls, and showed her white teeth in a smile that lit the solitary chamber, as she laid away the miniature.

"So, this is the Countess Cluche at twenty, I suppose; let it be hoped that she holds her own at five-and-thirty—that, I believe, must be about her age—and let it also fervently be trusted that she has laid aside the little, flat

ringlets of her girlhood, or rather, of grandmamma's time, to resume them no more—short waists and all such horrors, thank heaven, are out of fashion—notwithstanding the insanity of artists—and scarfs are only fit for crazy people who require to be dressed occasionally in their own attire; yet there is an azure abomination of that sort which does duty as a cloud in that miniature, and the boddice and sleeves are deplorable! But the face; 'aye, there's the rub;' mine can't be compared to it, perfect as they call it. I suppose Eugenie resembles her mother, whom mamma always said was the beauty par excellence of the family; and, therefore, I suppose she was chosen out to be sacrificed to Moloch or Mammon, one or both, like all lovely things! Catch an old heathen priest offering up a swarthy, deformed girl, or even heifer, to one of his grim idols! All must be peerless—perfect! Doves, lambs, fair maidens, and the like—oh! the whole system is, *was* detestable"—and, so saying, the drawer was locked impetuously that enclosed from that moment the ivory miniature of her cousin; and, with a parting glance at the mirror, Mrs. Thermor turned to welcome the newly arrived Mademoiselle Minande.

But all this time we have Mazon Rivers and Mrs. Thermor, the one silently contemplating the beautiful, half-averted face of the fairest lady of the haut ton—he had ever known—and the other watching the dying day with a vague sort of admiration that at last found outlet in the commonplace remark and question, "A lovely sunset, isn't it, Mr. Rivers? Do you think you could paint it?"

"No, madam, I do not think I could," answered the

young man as thus appealed to. His eyes followed those of his interlocutor with a dreamy rapture which seemed only a continuation of his recent mood. "The human face is all that I aspire to."

"Self-complacent, truly! As if one beautiful human face were not worth a hundred sunsets and ten times more difficult to paint."

"Of this there is little question; yet I think the vocation of the landscape and sky painter the rarest, the purest, of all others, and one requiring more innate fire, perhaps. A man of mediocrity often catches his inspiration from his theme, especially where it is lovely, and woman, his subject, assists him." And he bowed slightly, significantly.

The lady smiled at the implied compliment. She was used to adulation, and it did not move her profoundly, come from whom it might; but the man was so fresh, rather than green, that praise from his lips had a savor about it like clover or sea breezes.

She looked at him with a merry flash of her large brown eyes, half pleased, half arch, and a little derisive withal; and even in the dying light she saw how her glance made the red blood mantle his pale cheek and brow; and yet he returned her look earnestly and ardently.

"He is made of good stuff," she thought; "both timid and fierce. Yet, good heavens! what presumption underlies his humility! What if he were really, *truly* falling in love with me; wouldn't it be amusing?"

And she laughed, a half embarrassed laugh—such as was foreign to her lips—and, turning away, invited him to follow her into the drawing-room, already lit with

lamps and wax lights, as was the evening custom at Birk-braes, and in which the few guests of the house, which was rarely solitary, were already assembled for the evening festivity.

These temporary sojourners consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay and their daughters, old friends from Baltimore, and Rose and Lionel Blamire, the Scottish niece and nephew of the deceased Mr. Thermor, who had come to make a tour of the United States, and stopped at Birk-braes to condole with their aunt and cousin, whose bereavement dated back at the time of the commencement of our story—only two years. To the surprise of these conventional British minds, they found that their relatives had already emerged from weeds, and that with her mourning she had thought it advisable to cast off as much as possible all memory of her husband—or at least all mention thereof.

She had spoken of him, it is true, very feelingly and sweetly, and even with a few tears, when the young people first arrived; to each, in turn, she eulogized his virtues up to the utmost requisitions of the most exacting, but from that hour his name was never breathed before them, save when occasionally Eugenie would find herself in Rose Blamire's chamber quite unguarded, and there pour out her innocent reminiscences of "dear papa."

He had been absent very much at one time, and ill very long at another, she informed her cousin, was greatly older than mamma, and occupied a separate apartment, because of his misfortunes and because mamma had never been able to sleep without being near enough to touch her dear Eugenie from time to time, and

make sure that she was by her side in good condition through the watches of the night.

"Mamma is so nervous about me, you know," added Eugenie, sagely, "because I am the only daughter."

"I suppose that is the American custom," thought Miss Blamire, sighing as she remembered how different was the evidenced devotion of her own father and mother, of whom she had been deprived in childhood, towards one another; and how she, in sacrifice to this superior sentiment, had been committed to the tender mercies of nurse Blake and the walls of her great nursery, where stern discipline and relentless order reigned supreme.

"You must have been very happy to have enjoyed so much of your mother's society," Rose Blamire hazarded. "But my poor uncle; was he never a little bit solitary?"

"Oh, never! He had Fritz, his German valet, and Juba, his own boy—and Dr. Mandamus nearly all the time in his room. Besides mamma always sat with him a few hours every day, just to cheer him, you know, and I read the newspapers to him sometimes—such disagreeable sort of reading, Cousin Rose—did you ever try it?"

"Not often, dear; Lionel prefers to read them for himself, and I have no one else, you know."

"I thought mamma said you were engaged to Major Stanley. Don't you have him?"

"Oh! but you must not speak of that yet; and beside, we never read newspapers together," coloring violently as she spoke, and turning away to hide a quiet smile.

"What then—Moore's poems and kiss papers?"

"No, no; better things. Ruskin and Tennyson and dear Mrs. Browning. There, Eugenie, run away now

for a little while ; it is late, and I have my hair to dress to-day. Mrs. Jones is laid up with a felonious finger, and then—and then—my letter is still unwritten.” So, with a kiss, Eugenie was dismissed.

Had Rose Blamire heard her aunt’s alleged reason for leaving off her weeds at the earliest possible conventional time, when a true and earnest friend had remonstrated with her on what seemed an infringement on matronly etiquette as observed in her own circles, she might have felt more inclined to forgive her on the score of frank frivolity than she was on that of indifference to her deceased relative, based on infirmity and difference of years.

“It is very well,” she had replied to the conventional person who had seen fit to eulogize the constancy of a certain dame who never suffered a shade of gray or purple to intrude on the severe contrasts of black and white, that after five years of widowhood still characterized her costume, “all very well for Mrs. Vanness, who has the face and pose of a marble statue, to continue to robe herself in the attire that best becomes her, and she knows it well ; but mourning simply extinguishes me—there is no other word for it.”

“I am sure,” she continued, “dear Mr. Thermor would never have wished to see me miserable, could he have directed matters—although he did leave that injunction which prevents my taking Eugenie to France until she is over eighteen, or leaving her for one day, under certain penalties, which, I am sure, his executors would be very glad to exact. However, his old attachment to sister Eugenie and his detestation of Count Cluche might have sufficiently accounted for that ; but no man ever enjoyed to see his wife elegantly and suit-

ably appavelled, or idolized a woman more than he did me, in his peculiar way—he was very peculiar, we all know!) He used to say to me, smiling (I think I see him yet—you remember, Matilda, how his eyes were caught at the corners and how comically they sparkled when he laughed)—‘Isabella, my love, fashion is as essential to your *bien etre* as sunshine to a sunflower—a butterfly and color are the soul of your artistic beauty.’ And so it is. I require a rich setting—not that I liken myself to a gem of price by any means: but I need relief and worship all lovely hues. So that sometimes I am brought to believe that I am akin to Iris and came to earth on a rainbow, with the fragments of which I cannot bear to part.”

And thus she prattled on, until Mrs. Selman, convinced against her will that the rainbow tints of fashion succeeding the vanished storm of sorrow were indeed in strict accordance with the moral atmosphere which surrounded Mrs. Thermor, rose to depart—and came no more to preach, or counsel or persuade, though none the less a friend and casual visitor.

“As if one could or ought to mourn forever,” said Mrs. Thermor, shaking her sunny curls, as her mentor departed. “Why, two years out of a woman’s lifetime make a terrible breach in the Chinese wall of existence, and age one considerably, especially at my time of life—(I declare if there is not a wrinkle under my left eye, in spite of cold-cream!)—and I have no doubt that Mr. Littlepage was perfectly right when he said in Mr. Thermor’s funeral sermon ‘that not for all the treasures of the earth, and not even to dry the tears of beloved mourners, would his lamented friend return to his mortal



frame again.' To die twice would be very disagreeable, heigh-ho!—I wonder how it feels at any time! But there is not a particle of use in thinking about it until the time comes, and we can't help ourselves."

Something seems to tear one away from the vicinity of Mrs. Thermor and her guests whenever I begin to describe them or their surroundings. Let us return to the great well-lighted drawing-room, through the lace-veiled windows of which soft airs from the Chesapeake Bay are sighing, fraught with all balmy spring odors, and especially laden with the fresh, clean fragrance of a neighboring lilac hedge.

Up and down the room like two stately young stags walk Rose and Lionel Blamire—brother and sister—singularly devoted to one another; singularly alike and never very well satisfied to be apart.

They disturb no one with their noiseless steps on the thick, white Axminster carpet strewn with roses; and the sight of their flexile forms and graceful movements is pleasing to the eye, and lends life to the otherwise still apartments; for Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay and their hostess form one stiff group, and the Misses Lindsay and Mazon Rivers another, and there is little congeniality anywhere to be observed.

On a remote sofa, but sufficiently near a lamp for her busy purposes, sits the little French governess, Marie Minande; and by her side nestles the slender form of her pretty pupil, over whom she seems to exercise an almost magnetic influence.

By-and-by the lady of the house rises, willing to break the ice that seems to surround each group in the most effectual way, and crossing the spacious apartment stands

carelessly in front of Mademoiselle Minande, who, wholly engrossed in her crochet-work, scarcely lifts her head at the approach of the lady of Birk-braes, which negligence on the part of one so situated draws from between the teeth of Mr. Rivers a half-suppressed expression of contempt and indignation. "L'impertinente!" he murmured; and his eye followed every movement of that grand and graceful form, with its trailing robes of embroidered, snowy Indian muslin, worn over rose-colored silk as if it had been that of a goddess.

"Mademoiselle Minande," commanded, rather than demanded, Mrs. Thermor, in her very blindest tones, "Will you be good enough to give us some music? Schubert, if you please."

The strangest expression passed over the small, quiet face of the governess that had yet appeared upon its surface during the whole three months of her stay at Birk-braes (oddly as she often looked), as she arose to obey the mandate of her employer, deliberately winding up, before doing so, her crochet work and stuffing it in the pocket of her neat black silk apron, an article of attire which, change its material as she might, she never wholly relinquished. It seemed the one mark of caste that she had purposely assumed in order to defend herself from all imputation of the folly, nay, the crime, it might even seem to some, of emulation with those so indisputably above her in worldly position—that class dubbed by a witty writer of the period (a journalist named Willis) the upper ten.

Followed by Eugenie, she meekly walked to the piano—always opened at this house—but on which Mrs. Thermor herself was but an indifferent performer (a fact

of which she was too conscious to often intrude her own imperfection on her guests), and began at once and without preamble to sing Schubert's magnificent "Serenade" with a voice, a feeling, a power that silenced and concentrated the whole company in one thrilled and admiring group about the piano. It was as if the voice of a lark or a mocking-bird should suddenly burst from the throat of a ground-sparrow. The effect was magical, electrical. Even the censorious and impassive artist was drawn out of himself to approach her when the rest were gone (for she declined to sing again and quietly resumed her seat), and, after his congratulations in a tongue almost incomprehensible to Eugenie—"Vous chantez bien, Mademoiselle Minande, et 'con amore;' vous avez bien étudié ce pendant?"

"Merci, Monsieur," and the cool blue eyes were for a moment lifted to his own, rayed and rimmed as they were with purple, and capable of darkening on occasions to that intense and passionate hue.

He had never looked into such eyes before—they startled, they astonished him, as a quiet mountain tarn might do a stag that bent to drink of its clear, deep waters—with its transparency, with its depth. He had never before even imagined such tranquil self-possession in human orbs.

"But Mademoiselle has not replied," he pursued in French, "to my little interrogatory as to the study she has given her art."

"It is not my art par excellence, Monsieur, only one of them," she responded in the same language; "par exemple," and she raised before him the bit of crochet work on which she was employed. "I also dance and

sketch—both better than I sing, and practise stenography.”

“Mademoiselle is apparently very accomplished,” and he bowed.

“Oui, tres accomplie,” was the cool reply.

“My ball, Monsieur, if you please; it is on the floor beside you; it inconveniences me to-night to stoop or I would not trouble you; I have megraine,” and she clasped her hands closely across her brow, on which large violet veins were throbbing visibly. “Merci, Monsieur. Come, Eugenie, I must retire, and ’tis best you should go too; I suffer too much to remain. Monsieur will have the goodness, perhaps, to make our excuse to Madame.” And taking it for granted that Mazon Rivers would take charge of her excuses and duly deliver them, Mademoiselle Minande, followed by her pupil, rose and left the room without another look in the direction of her late companion, who stood transfixed by the calm assumption of “cette petite grisette,” as he mentally entitled her, who was his peer.

Rose Blamire was already singing her repertoire of beautiful English ballads, and when she had concluded “The Sea, the Sea, the Open Sea,” supper was served. Mr. Rivers and Lionel Blamire exerted themselves to rouse the dormant spirits of the remaining guests so successfully that the evening that had opened somewhat dismally terminated in the midst of smiles and badinage and merry anecdote, with a little open flirtation between the fair hostess and the youthful artist, which those who penetrated not the surface conceived to be nothing more than a part of the entertainment provided for the general amusement. But Rose Blamire saw deeper with those

disinterested eyes of hers (engaged women are proverbially clear-sighted in all "*affaires du cœur*" of others), and she told Lionel next morning, quite confidentially, that it would not surprise her at all if her aunt's next folly would be to marry "that penniless, designing artist, whose part was very well played, it must be confessed."

"If part it was," added Lionel, shaking his knowing head. "The truth is, Rose, there is a time of life when all women grow crazy, unless kept in restraint by matrimony. These widows of forty are the very deuce. Great heavens! why don't they introduce the *Suttee* in America along with other Indian innovations—opium, narghilas, and the like? I never could see, anyhow, why women cared to survive their husbands."

"Nor I," answered demure Rose Blamire, thinking of distant Captain Stanley and his possible fate in the Crimea—adding, a moment later, "except when there are children to be cared for, Lionel. After all, aunt is very devoted to Eugenie, and we must not be so censorious. I may be mistaken as to the artist. Please do not let me prejudice your judgment in this matter. I only felt that I must tell you, as I always do, what I saw and thought."

"There is one comfort—the boys will soon be at home, one or both, and trust them for nosing out a scent where a mother is concerned. If the Frenchman does not finish his pictures before they come, and vamoise rejoicing with his bag of gold, I predict trouble in this wigwam. I declare it is quite scandalous for that old woman to flirt as she is doing. What brought him here, anyhow? Why couldn't she do like other declining beauties who perpetuate their loveliness, and go to a city

studio and have her picture painted, with a friend to bear her company and lozenges in her reticule to keep her wide awake, unless the painter himself were gossip enough to do so, or be contented with a first-rate daguerreotype?"

Then again the story was told to him—to which he had listened so carelessly before as to have quite forgotten it—as to “how an old maid cousin, who had lately succeeded to a great heritage in France, and become the Countess Cluche (old French for ‘Cloche’)—“What a hideous name!” interpolated Lionel. “‘*Cluche*,’ indeed! But go on, Rose; I am in a hurry”—“determined to have a great picture gallery of her own, and gathering together all the old, time-worn, grim and grizzly faces of the La Cluche family, and setting them against dark-panelled walls to stare at one another across the intervening spaces of tessellated marble, she was now seeking some milder element of beauty among the people from whom she sprung, to mingle therewith the kindred of her beautiful mother, long since dead and laid to rest along with other dumb and run-down clocks.

“In this way she hoped to redeem and relieve this dreary array of ancestors who claimed their beginning from the artisan who made for and presented to Charlemagne the first clock ever manufactured in France, and so received his title and estates.”

“And the countess herself—is she an ugly old girl like the Cluches, or a pretty old girl like the Ruffins? Aunt is good-looking, you know; particularly when she is dressed in those sheeny silks of hers—good-looking and no mistake.”

“Chene—Lionel—what odd names you give things,

to be sure. Now don't forget the word Chene from Chinese. Well, I believe she is or has been beautiful, but she is quite old now—over thirty, aunt says (the Countess Cluche, I mean)—almost as old as aunt herself."

"Oh, that accounts for this queer notion of hers—hopeless old maid, of course, and no taste for lap-dogs. Distressing case. But really, Rose, what you say about this French artist sets me on tenter hooks. Why can't he fancy his equals and take to Miss Minande? The presumptuous puppy, he needs and will get a good caning when Charley and Ruffin come back to Birk-braes, and I will put them up to it, if needs be."

"Oh, wait, Lionel, I entreat you, before you breathe one syllable of what, after all, may be a mere suspicion!" said Rose Blamire, heartily alarmed at the result of her own observation and indiscretion. "If I see anything worth communicating to our cousins I will let you know at once, indeed I will; but do not, unless for her own good, represent me as a spy in the household of our aunt. The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that I *must* be mistaken. The ways of American women are so different from ours at home, and Colonel Kavanaugh will be at Birk-braes again shortly, and we can surely leave aunt's affairs in his discreet hands, as poor uncle did. What a pity he is lame and bald and pock-marked and homely and old, for she might marry him, then all would be satisfied. He is only a cousin-at-law, you know."

"You are very good at match-making, puss; but I should not like you to choose a mate for me on the same principles. Ugliness may be satisfactory and a sedative

for fast widows, for aught I know; but I believe in affinities and consistencies myself, and so it seems do you and Major Stanley.

“Good-by, sis; Rivers is a pleasant, gentlemanly fellow, and I won’t quarrel with him unless it becomes necessary. In the meantime cannot you, in your new capacity of match-maker, try to build up a good understanding between the artist and governess, or—if you have not too much on hand and don’t mind trouble—between (confound this collar, Rosié, it is too tight for me to-day)—between your humble servant and Miss Carrie Lindsay? Now, that’s the best joke of the season, isn’t it, sister?” and, before she could reply or recover from her amazement at his sudden folly, Lionel had departed, singing, or rather trolling, as he went, his favorite “piece of antique song,” which rolled out right lovely from his rich, round English voice—sweet and true as his own nature—yet without much compass—like that again—

“Gather roses while ye may,  
Old time will still be flying;  
And the same flower that blooms to-day  
To-morrow will be dying.”



## CHAPTER II.

That loveliness ever in motion that plays  
Like the light upon autumn's long shadowy days,  
Now here—and now there.—MOORE.

THERE was certainly never a greater misnomer than that of "Birk-braes," which Mr. Thermor—in honor of an ancestral Scottish home—bestowed on his Italian villa on a Southern strand. The house had been built for the reception of his fair young bride—the very much younger sister of the woman he had loved fifteen years before his marriage, when, as secretary of legation, he accompanied her father, Mr. Ruffin, on his mission to one of the minor courts of Europe.

His suit had been indignantly rejected by the ambitious parents of his beloved Eugenie in favor of a certain French nobleman of distinguished position, and also on a diplomatic mission—nearly double his own years—who about the same time addressed the lady of his heart, and laid before her his fortune and not very euphonious title.

The struggle of feeling she endured at that period was one that came near costing poor Eugenie her life, as it did her happiness, for she espoused the man her father had selected, reluctantly, and even loathingly, and in less than ten years was at rest and beyond the power of man to trouble more.

The heir of her house did not long survive her, and two little girls—the eldest and youngest of three children—were left to the care of a harsh, ungenial and utterly selfish father.

The deep retirement in which he lived, and the entire

cessation of all intercourse between himself and the family of his wife, involved the fate of these children in a sort of mystery that was now for the first time unveiled to Mrs. Thermor.

Truth to tell, she had given very little thought to her sister's descendants until the news reached her that Count Cluche was dead, and that his large estates and title had descended to one of his daughters—the survivor now ascertained satisfactorily to be Eugenie the elder.

The name of her sister had never been mentioned, save very casually, between her husband and herself, although the circumstances of their early attachment had been known to her from childhood. He had returned rich and middle-aged from California to find the daughter of his early friend on the brink of adversity—her parents were both dead, and the estate of Mr. Ruffin, his lawyers frankly told his daughter, would wind up a little less than nothing. She concluded, therefore, before the terrific change for which she was so little prepared, either by temperament or education, should occur, to accept her first good offer, made partly from compassion, and at eighteen married a man of forty-five for home and protection from the storms of life. Poor Ravenshaw had just been killed in Mexico, or she might have preferred poverty and camp life, and possible preferment to actual wealth. As it was, she became sincerely attached to Mr. Thermor in a moderate and matronly way, and led a very pleasant, placid life at Birk-braes—the house built to please her—enlivened, as was the abode, by the frequent presence of friends, and its monotony varied by occasional visits, on her part, of some length to Washington and Baltimore.

She was called by unanimous consent "the beautiful Mrs. Thermor," a title always gratifying to a woman, even if undeserved; had popular manners, because really very kind, amiable and unaffected; was attractive to gentlemen generally, but never flirted beyond one evening with any of her admirers, which was legitimate of course; and, indeed, voted most of them "bores" after the second interview. Like most Southern women she was a notable housekeeper and managed her little realm and household of well-trained servants so admirably that the wires that pulled the puppets (all scrupulously gathered into her own small hand) were never seen or suspected by her admiring guests.

So that it need not be marvelled at that when she swept in a little late that morning to the breakfast table of Birkbraes beautifully attired in pale pink percale, relieved with snow-white embroidered collar, cuffs, and the most becoming, airy little lace cap in the world, set on the very summit of her glittering curls—it was to survey a plentiful and well-spread board, with every dish in place and each one cooked to perfection.

This was the morning after the cheerful collation described in the last chapter, and the very same persons were present at this meal that had enjoyed the supper, with two additions, in the shape of Mademoiselle Minande and Col. Kavanaugh, the last named of whom had arrived on the midnight packet-boat.

He had been, according to his matutinal fashion, an hour or two on the gallery before breakfast time—was very glad to see the Blamires, who were his relatives, as well as those of the deceased Herbert Thermor, and with whom he had made a slight acquaintance at their hotel

in New York on their first arrival, a month before—bestowed kindly recognition on Mademoiselle Minande, who had been domesticated a month before his departure—but stared a little vaguely at our youthful artist, of whose advent he had not heard, and to whom he was introduced merely as Mr. Rivers, a guest who brought letters of recommendation from the Countess Cluche. Of course he shook hands with the stranger, American-wise—and was very civil indeed—but this did not prevent his questioning both himself and others as to how the dickens he happened to be there?—dressed, too, in that queer gray blouse, like a French creole—and upon hearing the reason of his presence from Lionel Blamire (who never hinted, however, for a moment by nod or look at his sister's suspicions), I am sorry to confess he burst into a hearty fit of swearing. “Just like their French impudence,” he added; “what right, I’d like to know, has that provincial old French maid to expect to palm off her dependents even for one day on a high-born Virginia lady? Moreover, what does she mean by exacting such tribute from a distant relation, of whom she has lost sight for years? A face like that, let me tell you, sir, has no business to be hackneyed. Ten to one—but we shall yet see the honorable Mrs. Thermor (Herbert was in Congress) bandied about as a ‘Bandit’s bride’—or some such stuff by means of the daguerreotype and cheap wood-cuts! It is an infringement on the code, sir;” and he took snuff and frowned grimly into space.

To all this Lionel listened very complacently, though it must be confessed the conversation took place some time after the breakfast of which there is question now. At this meal Mr. Rivers chanced to be placed opposite

Mademoiselle Minande, and, as the claret and champagne of the preceding evening had left him without much appetite, he employed himself between his sips of coffee in scrutinizing his little neighbor in a professional way. She sat with the most perfect seeming unconsciousness discussing a reed-bird, which he thought very appropriate food for one so delicate-looking, though his artistic eye recognized the strength and pliability of a steel spring about the slight, well-knit and finely rounded figure of the slender young girl.

As she raised to her lips a pigmy pinion of the bird she was evidently enjoying in a quiet way (our trans-Atlantic ortolan), one small, white fourth finger was extended in a dainty fashion, on which glowed a crimson stone, confined by a slight ring of gold, rather than set therein. It was so flame-like, so brilliant, that it might have passed as a ruby on the hand of a woman of wealth; as it was, it was garnet or carbuncle, of course, and, on close inspection, it seemed to be graven glass.

What an affectation—what a presumption even—he thought for a woman of that class to hazard such a pretension as a family crest! But perhaps it is only the initials of the poor little thing which she carries thus for convenience, in order to seal letters. M. M.—one letter will do for both names, which is a saving of expense. A conscientious, How glad I am that mine—my uncle's rather—is around my neck, not on my finger.

Just then the cool, blue eyes of Mademoiselle Minande were lifted to his face, and a smile, that singularly sweet and pungent smile, of which he had caught just one glimpse on the preceding evening—broke over her face. In another moment she shook suddenly with a faint, low

gust of laughter, as a breeze might shake a flower—still to death a moment after, as a pool beneath a shower—dimples—then is smooth again, as a lily sways and trembles under heavy drops of rain, then resumes its pose—sculptured sovereign of the bower! Then all was seriousness.

“I wonder if she was laughing at me, or at her own thoughts,” pondered Mazon. “Little derisive grisette! I wish I knew—but who need care for her or such as she?”

And he fell to crushing the fine white roll he could not eat and rolling into pellets beneath his crossed fingers, so as to enjoy the reality of a delusion.

And yet, even while so occupied with the strange dual sensation of the single ball, his artistic eye was taking in the details of her lineaments, as it could not help doing from long habit, truthfully, dispassionately, yet, truth to tell, languidly and with little interest. However well that aspect bore inspection, and whatever the surprise it may have awakened artistically, he could not deny that it was almost identically the face of Sappho, as graven on that ancient and remarkable cameo, which alone of all her pictures leaves any true or decided individuality. The same, the low, straight, serene brow; the exquisite nose in shape, yet not on a right line with the forehead, as in most Greek faces; the same the planting of the hair (raven black as was that of Mademoiselle Minande, and worn simply parted in front and twisted all together in one classic knot behind the small pearly ears); the same the pointed upper lip, a thought too long, of the otherwise perfect mouth; the same the short upturned chin, cleft, like a pomegranate, in the centre, yet exquisitely

curved; the same the slender, round, flexile and graceful throat.

"She is a little snob," he said, deep down in his heart of hearts, "and would be impertinent if she had half a chance. She is very pretty, though, and has wonderful eyes, too wonderful, and perhaps I may make a sketch of her before we part. I wonder what she wants with that little tortoise-shell eye-glass; she can't be near-sighted?"

"*Mademoiselle a la vue basse il paroît?*" he hazarded with a sympathizing bend of head as she adjusted her glass to look out of the window.

"*Oui, Monsieur, quand surtout je regarde d'en haut,*" and as she spoke she rose, as others were doing, then stood for a moment deliberately holding her glass to her eyes and looking directly down upon him with a mien of pride and glance of penetrating power that diverted and amazed him.

"*C'est cela!*" she murmured softly, dropping her eye-glass, and in another moment wending her way swiftly across the garden to the pavilion which served both as school-room and temporary atelier during his stay at "Birk-braes."

It had been indeed for some days a matter of discussion and uncertainty as to where, most advantageously to himself and conveniently to his hostess, Mr. Rivers could unroll his canvas; when *Mademoiselle* had suggested the school-room on account of its high narrow windows and their peculiar form—its remoteness as well from all sounds of distraction—as the fittest situation for the picture and painter both. Here then did Mr. Rivers pitch his tent, begging permission (a remnant of his Bohemianism, perhaps) to have his bed placed in a small room

adjoining—once used as a room for separate recitations when the children of Birk-braes had all been taught at home with others from the neighborhood by one despotic master who separated the boys and girls—assigning as his reason that in this way he could work on his picture at odd seasons.

His hours and those of Mademoiselle never clashed—as the sitting took place at noon—after which hour she returned no more, and Mr. Rivers worked alone until breakfast time, then rested until twelve o'clock. Yet as Eugenie made one figure in the group, by the especial request of her titled cousin, it was the habit of Mademoiselle to accompany her pupil to and from the sittings; at first by the request of Mrs. Thermor, and later, as it seemed, through sheer force of habit, and inability to comprehend that she had become “*de trop*.” Sometimes Mr. Rivers thought that she did see this and came with malicious intent, for he had confidence in her clairvoyance, but this opinion Mrs. Thermor never shared or suspected him of entertaining.

He had his doubts, too, about the eye-glass, which she made such an absurd speech and display over as a necessity.

“There! I knew it. The little witch is clairvoyant; she always looks up when I am thinking about her,” he muttered, as he met the wide blue eyes of the governess fixed upon him with something like surprise.

The group had just been arranged on that occasion; yet, before he took up his crayons, some spirit beyond himself prompted him to ask the opinion of Mademoiselle Minande as to its effect. It was not without asperity that he said (for he did not like her expression as she



calmly surveyed the subjects of his sketch), "Be good enough to tell me frankly, Mademoiselle, whether or not this adjustment of models pleases your critical and artistic eye?"

"Frankly, Monsieur, it does not."

"Will Mademoiselle deign, either by suggestion or actual arrangement, to improve it?" he asked, not without much vexation in his tone and eyes.

"I will endeavor to do so, Monsieur, if such is your wish, *vis-à-vis* the consent of Madame," she added, passing into English with slight hesitation.

"Oh! it is our wish to look as beautiful as possible in the eyes of posterity—for the benefit of which, I believe, we are being painted—so assist Mr. Rivers, if you think you can, Mademoiselle Minande, though of this I have my doubts," laughing and shaking her glossy curls.

"A little more to the right, Madame," said Mademoiselle, again subsiding into French, "there, look out of the window, if you please, at the guelder rose-bush growing near—so!—the profile now is more than half-revealed, always, if fine, desirable after early youth in every portrait rather than the full face—is not that the portrait painter's rule, Monsieur?" Then, without waiting for his reply, she proceeded placidly, "Drop the hand with entire abandon over the arm of the chair, the droop of the wrist is, when fine, so beautiful—let the cashmere fall as it will, it matters not, draperies adjust themselves best; the color is ugly, but Monsieur can enliven it a little with his brush. Those India-reds are so brickdusty, compared to ours. I like our fine French cashmere infinitely better, but for the tradition that

hangs about those oriental fabrics, the fine odor of balmy sandalwood—second-hand things at best, however.”

“Quite a little lecture, Mademoiselle Minande, for which imagine all sorts of applause. I, you see, have my hands full of all sorts of crayons and cannot do you justice, and Madame has her fan—”

“You will paint that also, Monsieur, I hope,” added Mademoiselle Minande, eagerly, and as though she had observed no satire in the remarks of the artist. “It is such a pretty thing, so distinctive—so American—a fan of partridge feathers, capped with the wing of a cardinal bird! I am sure the Countess Cluche would like just such a characterization among her own people.”

“Yes, it shall go in certainly, if you think so,” said Mrs. Thermor, good-naturedly; “but I confess I only bought it to fan with. It is so warm to-day, the shawl is quite oppressive.”

“As for Eugenie, you cannot go wrong with her, Mr. Rivers, strive as you may,” said Mademoiselle Minande, in continuation; “you could not make her pose affected if you were to try. She is at the age where nature will have her way, and her attitudes are all her own, which is much to know. There, just as she sits, with her hands clasped, looking up at me, she is perfection.”

“Oh, Mademoiselle, it is because I love so much to hear you talk. Your French is so different from that of every one else, that I understand nearly half you say.”

“Ah! Eugenie, did you but comprehend all, you would may be not so well it like,” said Mademoiselle in her very unidiomatic English, in the knowledge of which, however, she seemed to improve each day. “But I truly fear Monsieur likes not my change of pose,” she continued, turning to the artist.

"Just as Mrs. Thermor chooses," he rejoined in French, "for all suggestions I am truly grateful;" and with a bitter bow he turned from Mademoiselle Minande, who again quietly subsided into her embrasure, and was once more absorbed in her work, to the exclusion of all else, as it seemed, to every one but Mr. Rivers, conscious in some inexplicable way of her constant observation.

After some consultation and hesitation on the part of both artist and sitter, the superior grouping of Mademoiselle Minande was carelessly adopted and the sketch of the picture was made.

Since then the work had progressed slowly—owing to frequent interruptions—such as are unavoidable in the case of a "Dame of Societe," as Mr. Rivers in his reverence for that peculiar position in woman entitled Mrs. Thermor. She was the centre of a pretty thickly settled and very pleasant country neighborhood in which she played to perfection the part of social martyr; enjoying, it must be confessed, the means of her martyrdom—inasmuch as that she was never satisfied without daily calls and resident guests.

This was the first near approach Mazon Rivers had ever made to a lady of high degree since, in his velvety youth, his uncle used to take him occasionally to the soirees of Madame la Marquise de Soissons, where he saw only fussy old fat women, or dried-up old yellow ones, curled and rouged, who played at ecarte and drank weak chocolate and lemonade as a finale. He had cherished no very pleasing reminiscences of these interminable evenings—"au troisieme"—and the contrast between such women and such life as the peerless hostess of Birkbraes and her incomparable menage and Italian palazzo,

rather than mansion, presented, was forced upon him every day and hour. There was, too, in the very nativity of Mrs. Thermor, as well as her habit of life, a noble instinct of hospitality which knew not how to differ between guest and guest—unless indeed it were in favor of the humble and neglected. Had Mr. Rivers been a prince of the blood instead of a young and struggling artist, glad of a few orders, so that he might again breathe the air of his native land and perhaps get a foothold therein, like a new McGregor, perfectly modest and unostentatious although refined, he could not have been treated with greater consideration than from the very first marked his abode with Mrs. Thermor.

Unused to attention so disinterested and appropriating as individual many gracious sayings and glances, such as is the habit of good society to lavish on all visitors, the flattered vanity of the young man was doubtless at the root of the indiscreet passion, which after a short sojourn under the roof of Mrs. Thermor (with whom he was necessarily thrown in a daily attitude of fictitious intimacy by the unconstrained manners of the atelier) took entire possession of his being.

Not, however, until its morbid fangs were fixed upon his vitals did he appreciate its entire hopelessness, and even madness—too late, alas! for the cool intervention of reason or the proper suggestions of pride, which stern admonitor so often plucks back the slave of vanity from the very brink of the moral or social precipice.

Many strange threads are woven in the woof of a passion like to this, which has no basis in congeniality of taste, pursuit, age, or even position, and strange as well are its devices of self-delusion.

The very beauty and perfection of Mrs. Thermor's toilette had unconsciously much to do with the profound admiration of this poor young Bohemian, whose life had been passed in the forest of the town, so to speak, in entire seclusion from the "beau monde" and every aspect of society save one for which he had neither fitness nor vocation.

Mrs. Thermor had a peculiar fondness for silken array, and of superb dresses of this fabric she had enough to have stocked the wardrobe of a mandarin. It was the time of changeable silks—an era almost in the romance of dress—and these she affected in every variety of contrast and harmony. There was one splendid sheen of green and gold in which she appeared sometimes when the evenings were suddenly cool and the softer blending of pearl and rose seemed too pale for the still uncertain spring weather—and one of which he had a mere glimpse of bronze and crimson—in which she had at first proposed to be painted, with her small knowledge of true artistic effect, arrayed in which she had reminded him incessantly of the Queen of Sheba calling on Solomon—not that he thought himself that wiseacre.

Soft, sweet and bright gems added to the effect of these transcendent and almost transcendental robes, and a soft odor of violets was always wafted by her approach, which seemed to belong to her by right as to the spring itself, and not to be confined to the gossamer of her fairy handkerchiefs—in the shape of Lubin's extract of violettes de Parma.

Such a divine creature after "Minnette" and "Alzires" and even after that little queer, faultless, mysterious being of the green domino with whom he had once imagined

himself "eperdument amonieux" in the days of his hot youth and the Louvre. It was like being on social terms with a Goddess, it was divine, it was Ixion and Juno redivivus intoxicating. It was Malmsey wine, hasheesh and absinthe all at once—not that he was a consumer of any one of these articles—but that he ranked naturally according to Bohemian estimates.

Nothing impure, nothing sordid or sensual mingled in this dream of ecstasy. It was "sui generis" and peculiar to such organizations as his own, modest, gentle, true, reverential, yet ever willing and ready to put forth wings for the breeze of vanity—and insatiable for adventure—of such was Dædalus!

He was content so far to bask in the atmosphere of her beauty, the Indian summer softness and splendor of which was more entrancing to his sense and soul than had ever been the more bracing air of youth, to revel in the sunshine of her smiles and the sweet, low-spoken music of her winning words.

We have seen that to this adoration Mrs. Thermor was beginning to wake up, not without a fluttered sense of what she owed herself.

Admiration was another thing quite separate and apart from the devotion she began to fathom in the heart of the susceptible young man. She conceived it to be her legitimate right, come from where it might, but she had not the least wish to be entangled in an "affaire du cœur" with this young nameless one, graceful, chivalric and attractive though she found him.

And as for him, the time was probably soon to come when he was to recognize in all its hideous truth the absurdity of his passion; the impossibility of its fulfil-

ment ; the hopelessness of his condition ; when he was to feel that a Tartar horse might as well attempt to leap the Chinese wall as for him to pass over those barriers which custom and convention had set between him and the object of his adoration.

To do Mrs. Thermor justice, from the time of her discovery she was very careful not to flatter the "amour propre" of her artist guest as she had been doing on common principles before, for her nice intuition soon divined the fatal fallacy of treating him as though he had been accustomed to such mere airy nothings as were habitual between men and women of the world—the battle-dore and shuttle-cock of compliment—"words signifying nothing," without which general society would seem so stagnant.

Yet it cannot be denied that this fresh, true, unmistakable and knightly devotion touched her deeply ; all the more that this was her first experience of real heart-felt love and love-making since she was a girl, when, in a very different yet equally ardent manner, Ernest Ravenshaw had testified his passion.

That other offers she had received had been purely conventional, and of these, without a heart-throb, she had accepted the *best*—after hearing that poor Ravenshaw was killed at Buena Vista, where so many other brave spirits were set free by the atrocious Mexican Lancers—(Clay and Vaughan, Morgan and McKee—can we ever forget you? the heroes of one little town!)

It was true that some years later, when she was a happy wife and mother, she had met him face to face on Broadway, New York, supporting a lovely lady on his arm, who seemed to be his wife, and, turning into a store from

the shock, fainted dead away. Afterwards she heard that, in spite of dreadful wounds, he had made his way to Baltimore to prevent her marriage, and on arriving a day or two late had forsworn Maryland forever and gone off to the frontier on some desperate duty among the Indians, where he remained for years. Since then his name had never been mentioned by her or before her, for was he not more than dead to her, faithless fellow that he was, married to another and apparently so happy, and just as handsome, too, as ever!

With her repudiation of him and his memory had died the one romance of her life, unless, indeed, this strange "penchant" of hers for Mazon Rivers (it really was no more!) and his profound passion for her might be supposed to do duty as a second edition of the original novelette. Sentiment was not her moral atmosphere—that is certain—but she was kind, tender-hearted and generous, and not sufficiently inclined to inflict pain even to be a coquette, flirt though she might, "just to keep her hand in," and "pour passe le temps," as she once declared to an accusing friend who reproached her with frivolity.

All the more that she was moved by the truth, sincerity, and involuntary nature of the devotion of Mazon Rivers, did she determine to save him from the mortification and misery that its culmination must produce. So she set about checking his passion in the bud, conscientiously, as she persuaded herself, by treating him with a careless, off-hand kindness, that any man, with the least *usage du monde*, would have skilfully interpreted.

Not so poor Mazon. Like the moth, excluded from the candle by its crystal shade, he plunged boldly over



and into its depths, only to crawl forth scorched, mangled, and disabled.

Those daily sittings, whether short or long, added fuel to his flame, and the almost constant presence of the child and governess alone prevented an insane declaration of his passion which must have cut him off at once and forever.

Sometimes, however, when duties or pleasures called her elsewhere, Eugenie and Mademoiselle Minande came alone to the atelier, and Mrs. Thermor contented herself with sending a little perfumed billet of excuse, very brief and very simply worded, which, careless as it was, would be placed near the heart of its recipient, and bedewed with tears and kisses when none were present.

On one of these occasions, when it was essential to paint some detail of Eugenie's face or form which detained her longer than usual, the little governess unbent from her usually reserved and warder-like mood to become quite chatty and communicative. She had an epigrammatic way of talking that was rather amusing to Mr. Rivers, and when the sun had withdrawn its rays he sometimes deigned to look upon and even admire the moon; or, to make a better simile, he would lend ear to the twittering of the sparrow when the lark was mute or singing too high for him—far in the clouds—whither he could not, dared not, go now.

"Have you ever seen our patroness, the Countess Cluche?" she asked of Mazon Rivers, in that clear, incisive voice of hers, and in the purest French that it was possible for woman's lips to speak.

The words "our patroness" went through him like a knife. It was, perhaps, the chief reason for his aversion

to Mademoiselle Minande, that this "esprit de corps" was supposed to exist between them. He felt himself so immeasurably her superior that the idea of equality galled him, for he remembered his gentle birth and breeding, and felt that it lifted him above the class to which he belonged through poverty and profession; yet he replied quite calmly and politely in the absence of Mrs. Thermor.

"Never. I confess I have wished for such a pleasure in vain. She treated with me by proxy. From the miniature Mrs. Thermor has shown me, she must be a nobly beautiful as well as a noble lady."

"She is neither. She is far from beautiful. I have known her to be guilty of some very mean things," was the rejoinder.

"Mademoiselle, you surprise me! I for one am the recipient of her bounty, and I feel that I am almost called upon to resent such an aspersion—you, too, I believe." He hesitated: he could not bear to accuse her, even his antagonist, of ingratitude.

"Have cause to defend her. Is that what you would say? Well, then—for I take your silence to mean assent—I can only reply that, while she has seemed my friend, she has been my enemy. This exile here, for instance, what does it amount to? It is simply heart-breaking." And she sobbed.

Let it be remembered that the conversation was conducted in French, and that Eugenie, perfectly absorbed in the pages of a "Godey's Lady's Book," could scarcely have understood had she attended to it, novitiate in French as she still was, though strong in the exercises.

He looked at her with surprise. Her voice, her face,

were quivering with emotion ; but he only said in response, and very coolly, too—

“Why not return, then, Mademoiselle? No one has a right to compel you to remain against your will. Yet, forgive me ; I thought you very well situated indeed—very happy. Mrs. Thermor is so amiable—so perfectly well-bred.”

“I really have no cause to complain of any one except myself and the Countess Cluche ; but she has been in some respects a hard mistress to me, and at times I detest her. Then comes a reaction,” and she wiped her eyes. “But you will probably never know any more than that such is the state of things. It was a great weakness in me to complain at all. But you, Monsieur, who seem so sympathizing and are my compatriot, must excuse me if you can,” and she dashed a final tear from her large humid eye.

“Mademoiselle,” and he laid down his brush, “I really feel very sorry, very sorry indeed, that you are unhappy and so painfully situated, and if I can do anything at all to serve you I beg that you will command me freely. Perhaps, would Mademoiselle like to borrow a small sum of money for her return or other purposes?”

“On, thank you, Monsieur ! you are truly kind and generous, but it is not that I need aid at all. It will not be very long before my salary is due for the first quarter, after which I am at liberty to depart if I list to do so. No ! it is simply the feeling of desolation—exile—and some disappointment, perhaps, which, however, I can never explain to any one, that oppresses me so deeply. Now that I have spoken, however, I think I shall take

fresh heart of grace to hope and bear. It always was my way;" and she smiled.

"I trust so, Mademoiselle; and if it relieves you to speak to me as to a friend, or even national brother, do so freely. We are both, as you say, in a strange land, and in a degree compatriots—though I am by birth and early training, as perhaps you did not know, an American."

"Yes; so I have been told. It is easy, indeed, to see that you are not a Frenchman."

"Mademoiselle means that remark no doubt as a quietus to my vanity."

"Not at all. I, for one, do not particularly admire Frenchmen. There, if you will know the truth! I have suffered too deeply at their hands."

"Vraiment, Mademoiselle," assuming a deeply sympathetic air, "quelque affaire du cœur je paries?"

"Et si c'était cela, Monsieur, pensez vous que j'en parlerais? C'est que vous ne comprenez pas—ne me comprendre jamais!" And with a slightly tragic air she rose and crossed the room to get her veil and gloves.

"Femme incomprese," she heard him murmur. "Vraiment c'est impayable;" and he laughed low.

"Monsieur, forgive me," she said, suddenly turning to him before she left the pantheon; "we all have our weaknesses"—"foiblesses" was the word she used—which sounds better and expresses more. "One of mine is to get very quickly and unreasonably vexed sometimes—where no offence is meant. It is *that* want of intention that offends me most frequently. Do you understand what I mean, Monsieur?"

"No. I confess I do not; you are paradoxical, but have you not just said yourself that I never can understand you?"

"Not without God's help, Monsieur," she said, so gravely that her look, her accent startled him.

Good God! is the woman mad, or fanatical? he thought, that she adjures me so. What can God have to do with this matter?

"I am not what you think me, Monsieur," she replied, as if answering to his muttered thoughts; "but very plain, very practical, very real; though not ashamed of cherishing exalted sentiments, and to prove to you that I am so, this realistic being for the sake of our community of class, and from the fact that we are compatriots, I meant to-day to offer you the benefit of my needle, while here, to repair such garments as else must become useless to you. I have observed, with pain and concern, that your shirt-bosom is buttonless; that some of your handkerchiefs are unhemmed; that there are holes in your socks, which your slippers do not conceal, and that your new gray linen blouse is badly ripped behind. Permit me to repair these articles, and you will afford me disinterested pleasure."

"Mademoiselle, how can I sufficiently thank you? Believe me, I am truly grateful. I fear that I, indeed, have strangely misconceived you," and he held out his hand frankly, which she took, with a slight courtesy, and murmured "Adieu," then turned away, followed by Eugenie, the last well pleased to be relieved so soon from the dreariness of a solitary sitting.

## CHAPTER III.

My dearest madam,  
Let not my love encounter with your hate.—SHAKESPEARE.

It were all one  
That I should love a bright particular star  
And seek to wed it.—SHAKESPEARE.

ON the following morning, Mrs. Thermor found herself alone with Mr. Rivers in his atelier, as was rarely the case.

He did not need Eugenie, who was glad to be excused, for the sittings had lost their novelty to her. Rose Blamire had gone out on the bay fishing with the Lindsays, and the post of Mademoiselle Minande was of course at the side of her pupil. Colonel Kavanaugh, who was a fixture in the establishment, and whose interest in Mrs. Thermor and her children was paternal, was smoking on the piazza, and could be distinctly seen as he furled and unfurled his banner-like newspapers by the inmates of the pavilion through the widely opened door and windows.

The flower garden lay between the mansion and this little vine-clad school-house (of late, remodelled and newly-named), and the slaves engaged at that season in repairing the walks, and putting the beds in order, under the direction of a Scotch gardener, were constantly passing beneath the windows of the pretty building which now served as an atelier as well, and so prevented any feeling of especial privacy that might under the circumstances have proved embarrassing to Mrs. Thermor.

As in accordance with the "pose" that had been de-

terminated on, Mrs. Thermor was obliged to look from, into, and beyond the guelder rose. She saw Mademoiselle Minande at a considerable distance, slowly passing up and down the hyacinthe walk, with an open book, on which her eyes were fixed intently; while Eugenie, by her side, played with her white rabbit. It was the hour of the first recess, and they, in their several ways, were both enjoying it.

"The strangest little creature," Mrs. Thermor broke out suddenly and absently. "Truly my cousin said well when she spoke of her odd ways—Mademoiselle Minande I mean, of course—Mr. Rivers. By-the-by, do you know, I cannot get a word out of her, good, bad, or indifferent, about the Countess Cluche. She will not even describe her appearance, referring me, when asked to do so, to the miniature sent by her hand, which, of course, is authentic, and bears marks about it of decided individuality—a beautiful brunette style—fair, and yet dark. After all, a picture is so unsatisfactory! She may have bad teeth or a disagreeable smile, for aught I know, or an unpleasant voice and manner. It is really too provoking. I can't even arrive at her exact age, or how she carries it—through this little piece of perversity and non-committalism (excuse the coinage), though I really think it is worthy of N. P. Willis, our *creme de la creme*, you know, of editors."

Mr. Rivers bowed deprecatingly; he had never heard of Mr. Willis, but was ashamed to acknowledge his ignorance, so he only looked his recognition, which answered perfectly.

Mrs. Thermor went on as if possessed solely with her theme. "Now, if you would only take the trouble to

describe the Countess Cluche to me with all your artistic accuracy, I should be so much obliged. Details are so delightful when well done."

"Pardon, Madame"—forgetting himself into French—"Je n'as pas l'honneur, de connaitre Mademoiselle La Countesse Cluche. Je ne l'as jamais rencontre meme;" adding, "I have not even had the pleasure of seeing her," as he returned with some confusion to the vernacular, in consideration for his American friend.

"Ah, je comprends parfaitement quoique je," she replied. "Indeed I understand very well, though I speak rarely," translating for the benefit of her guest, who, it must be confessed, was not struck with her effort as to accent; but this, in her case only, seemed one perfection more—an adorable condescension which added the grace of humility to all the other sweet and attractive qualities of her exalted and goddess-like nature.

"I thought you were well acquainted with my cousin—at home in her salon; in those of her associates. How, then, did you obtain her letter of recommendation? Quite an enthusiastic one, I assure you, though you read it, of course; everybody does; those things are left open on purpose to be read; it is expected."

"Yet I did not read it, not knowing such to be expected of me, Madame. I have indeed very little acquaintance with the usages of the 'grande monde;' poor and unknown, though not without good belongings, I have been obliged to affiliate as far as in me lay with those of my own apparent class and profession with whom I have happened to be thrown. I was reared very exclusively, however, and all my instincts are opposed to Bohemianism."



"I should think so—nay, I am quite sure of it, from what I know of you and see daily. But you must tell me how it happened that my cousin felt such interest in you, a stranger, whom she had not even the curiosity to desire to see before sending him forth on a mission of such consequence," and she laughed nervously.

"It was through Madame Burgenheim that I obtained the commission, Madame, through her zealous friendship, unslumbering it seems through all those years of separation which succeeded my uncle's embarrassment until that time we had occupied apartments in the same hotel—hers higher up and more inexpensive than our own, which were in the entresol, and opened on large, old-fashioned gardens, hedged and walled, of which we had the use; so that we were as private as if in the country. But after my uncle's failure we moved away, and saw her no more. She could not follow us, you know, and we never called to see her, as we might have done for the sake of old acquaintance. However, it is true that after her little mysterious protégé came to live with her she closed her doors to visitors and rarely walked in the garden; so that the alienation was commenced before we parted. I called once at the hotel after my uncle's death, but she was gone; yet you see she remembered me, and managed to interest the Countess Cluche in my pictures and success when she came into power."

"Oh, yes! She was her governess, I remember; and now resides with her. What devotion there seems to have been on both sides! During the Count's life I supposed she was banished from 'Les Hirondelles,' at least after educational services ceased to be important. I have heard something vaguely, I know not what, about

great discord between father and daughter, fomented by a governess, but which terminated in a reconciliation. Do you know anything of the truth of the story?"

"There was an engagement, I believe, which Mademoiselle was unwilling to fulfil with Raoul Delmar, a cousin, and Mademoiselle retired to a convent to be relieved from the marriage, but after the death of the objectionable person who was to have been her father's heir, she returned to him shattered in health and youth, of course, and lived with him until he died (her young sister having died long before), when she was rewarded by his bequest to her of his estate, which, I must say, as far as I am concerned, she uses very munificently, although I have heard hard things said of her."

He suddenly checked himself, remembering when and by whom, with an honorable appreciation of the nature of such confidence, nor could all the eagerness of Mrs. Thermor's curiosity persuade him to throw further light on his own impulsive utterance, or yield his authority.

"Tell me at least of Madame Burgenheim, as you profess to know nothing of the Countess Cluche, and also of the little protégé of whom you spoke—a mysterious personage—a moment ago. Who and what was she? Did you know her well?"

"A slender, child-like creature, who was in delicate health, and wore a green silk domino, by the order of her physician, to shield her complexion from the light so inimical to its restoration after confluent small-pox; came to reside with Madame Burgenheim about a year before we left the faubourg St. Germaine. She was very young evidently, and graceful as a fawn. She used to play in the old garden sometimes of summer evenings—never

earlier in the day—but I neither saw her face distinctly nor knew her name, though we sat side by side in the Louvre for the space of a whole year, copying pictures together, which, by-the-by, we never completed. That was nine years ago, Madame, and I was under twenty, while she, I suppose, was scarcely seventeen; at least her hands and throat and movements seemed those of a person not yet matured, and were all very pretty, I remember—though Jules Despreaux, one of our art students, always declared his belief that she covered her face to hide some woeful deficiency or deformity, that of an eye, or even nose, perhaps, but this I knew was not true, from observation.”

“I thought you never saw her face, Mr. Rivers?”

“Nor did I, Madame, clearly enough to recognize it again; yet one evening I saw its contour and outline, both perfect, in the dim light before the street lamps were lit, and while she was on the sidewalk, in an unguarded moment, near one of the quays. Her protectress was ill on that occasion, and she came to the Louvre alone, or rather with an old purblind bonne—her constant attendant—and as the evening was closing when she left the gallery, I followed at a respectful distance. You see we were going in the same direction, Madame, so it was no trouble to see her home; and yet etiquette forbade that I should approach her with an offer of this sort—that inexorable French code of manners, or morals, which permits no acquaintance between the young, not authorized by the old.

“A carriage was standing by the quay with liveried footmen, and as she approached it I saw her stop, then turn on her footsteps and fly impetuously back in my

direction, leaving her *bonne* confounded, and in another moment she had fallen in my extended arms and was clasping me tightly around the neck, while her green domino was lying on my shoulder.

“‘Oh, save me, sir,’ she said; ‘I know who you are, and that you are good and noble. Take me away; there is a wicked man waiting for me down there in that carriage. He did not see me, I hope, because I stopped too quickly—but he was waiting to seize me, and if he does I am lost—I am lost.’”

“Such a wail went up from her young lips, Madame, as would have moved a heart of stone; but I had just time to lead her to the corner of the next street and bid her fly (what became of the *bonne* I never knew), when I saw a man leap from the carriage and approach me with menacing gestures.

“There was only one thing to be done, of course, so as to gain time. I threw myself between him and the object of his pursuit, so as to block his progress, which was not difficult to do at the corner of that dark, narrow street. In another moment we were struggling fiercely, blindly; but I had not been to the schools of defence for nothing, and, slight as I was in comparison with his burly form, would soon have dealt him an effectual blow had he not forestalled me by the use of his stiletto.

“A keen, sharp pain, like the stab of some Titanic needle, seemed to penetrate my vitals. I staggered, fell, and it was not until my poor little bird had time to wing her way home and make my uncle (who knew all about her, I believe) acquainted with my condition (for she turned and saw the rencounter as she ran) that I was picked up, bleeding and insensible, on the very spot

where the ruffian had stabbed and left me. I should have been dead long before morning, the doctor said, had I not been found, and the street was obscure and no thoroughfare—a sort of cul-de-sac—though it opened by means of an alley into another, through which my incognita made her escape. It was a short cut, and she had fortunately taken it once or twice before when belated or in a hurry to get home with Madame Burgenheim. This was my first adventure.”

“Why, surely, after all you had done for them, those ladies were not insensible to your sufferings? Did neither of them call on you—you, their young champion and knight errant?”

He smiled, well pleased with her enthusiasm, which was real, not assumed, as her beaming eyes, her heightened color manifested, her hands clasped in deep attention, forgetful of the “pose” required for the portrait.

He, too, had ceased to think of his picture, so absorbed was he in the reality, and had he followed his impulse, another moment would have found him at her feet, wildly kissing her hands and the very hem of her garment, perhaps, in the humility of his adoration.

He was as truly love-sick as was Romeo when he loved Rosaline, and before he knew Juliet.

But he restrained his inclinations manfully, and it was well he did, for a minute later Colonel Kavanaugh’s hat and about half the face under it passed along and was cut by the level of one of the windows, while the keen old gray eyes were darted into the atelier, in a mere passing glance that meant nothing at all, probably, and sought nothing, but which certainly must have been

quite as satisfactory as it was searching, as he came no more.

The lady had come into pose again and the artist had resumed his brush and his story before the old Seneschal of Birk-braes saw fit to reconnoitre, which he conceived to be both his duty and privilege, especially when strangers and foreigners were about.

“For reasons that I never understood,” continued Mr. Rivers, “I saw Madame Burgenheim no more, though I know my uncle thought them satisfactory and approved of her conduct. I was very ill; the stiletto had pierced one of my lungs, and it was long before I recovered my stamina, even after convalescence had set in. In those days we were rich, and needed nothing of comfort or luxury that money could buy; but later, when the dark days came, you know, Madame Burgenheim remembered me and gained me this appointment, or commission rather, and so amply repaid her debt of gratitude, if such, indeed, it could be considered.”

“Oh, certainly, the obligation was her own. Do you not suppose the young girl was her daughter, or near relative in some way? She might have had good reasons, you know, of her own, for wishing to conceal her very existence. Remember Pauline and Madame de Genlis. I wonder, by-the-by, whether or not Countess Cluche knows aught of this transaction. Ahem! Living as she did in a convent so long I suppose she is very devout, very particular?”

“I cannot tell, indeed, Madame, how far she is, or was, acquainted with this phase of the life of Madame Burgenheim, who had long since left her service, probably. But I can never believe that anything like disgrace or

wrong-doing attached to either of those most perfect persons—Madame Burgenheim or her protégé. There was about both an atmosphere of purity that was unmistakable.”

“Now it is worth while to have a champion like you, Mr. Rivers, staunch to the backbone. You cannot prevent me from drawing my own inferences, however, confide as you may. Tell me frankly, did you never see little green domino again, with or without her absurd disguise?”

“She came to me several times, Madame, through a private door in the wall that was known to one old valet—Rosolio alone. He had found it out accidentally, and he it was who led her to my side. She came at twilight, when my uncle was at his club and Madame Burgenheim I suppose elsewhere engaged, probably at her devotions, and those visits recur to me more as the revelations of an angelic presence than anything with which my memory or imagination have ever furnished me.

“Clothed in her long white robes, and closely veiled like a young nun or bride on her marriage day, and redolent with the odors of the flowers she brought me and laid with her own hand on my pillow, while her low voice breathed prayers above my head—she came and departed like a phantom of delight. Of course I imagined myself wildly in love with her, and told her so; and I supposed my passion returned, though she never acknowledged this in words, at least, and never but once permitted me to clasp her hand in mine even for a moment, and that was on the occasion of her farewell visit, when we interchanged rings and kisses in the pres-

ence of Rosolio, who was vowed to keep our secret, and so ended my first and last romance."

"What a tame lover you were, after all! Kisses, indeed! Why did you not pursue your good fortune after you got well again, or send Rosolio to do so?"

"My uncle discharged Rosolio when he failed, which was not very long after, and I remember, while I was ill, that he called him, in my hearing, an intriguing old Italian scoundrel, so I suppose he suspected something, especially as this worthy man took much pains to convince me, later, that my little green domino was nothing but a runaway nun, who had been restored to her convent at last by Madame Burgenheim.

"But my uncle never unclosed his lips on the subject to me from first to last; and, in his deep adversity and sorrow, which laid the foundation of his mortal malady, I could not bear to cross or grieve him in any way. After his death I failed to trace Rosolio, for whom I sought; and, as I told you, found that Madame Burgenheim had departed without leaving any clue to her whereabouts at the old St. Germaine lodging; but when she called to give me the mission of the countess, I did renew my inquiries about her protégé, but she refused to answer, as she had a right to do.

"She may be married, dead, or buried in the walls of a convent, one or the other, for aught I know, or even care, but I sincerely wish her happiness, wherever she may be, angel as she is, whether on earth or in heaven."

"And you mean to let the matter drop here?"

"Oh, surely, Madame would not have me persevere against so many obstacles, the greatest of all, perhaps, my own indifference!" He said these words slowly.



"But that you should be indifferent after all that, is so dreadful! Did the wound leave a scar? Let me see the ring. I suppose you wear it still? I always thought constancy the sweetest thing in nature—but the most incomprehensible. Life is so short you know—and every year makes such a difference in everybody, except some old selfish fossils that never change—Colonel Kavanaugh, and the like," and she rang out a merry peal of laughter, as suddenly checked as she recollected the excessive impropriety of ridiculing a member of her household to a transient guest—a sacred relic, too, of her husband's trust and friendship—to an itinerant artist—even if the one was prying and disagreeable and the other as charming as a prince of fairy tales.

"I have lost the ring since I came here," he said with some constraint. "I must have forgotten it on my washstand when hurried by the breakfast bell, and when I came back it was gone—thrown out probably by the servant. It was an opal, and that is why I removed it when I placed my hands in water—the legend goes, you know, that those stones are ruined by frequent ablutions—such as is my necessity to make."

"Oh yes, of course, those dreadful paints—enough to spoil any hands! Wouldn't you like to give up painting altogether, Mr. Rivers? It is such a disagreeable, dirty work; then the smell of the oils! it is enough to make one faint—and the danger of the white lead and the chromo green. Did you ever have the painter's colic, Mr. Rivers?"

"Never, Madame; the gentlemen of our art are not subject to it. It is confined to mechanics." And he drew himself up slightly.

"House-painters. Oh! yes, I had forgotten; of course there is an immense difference!"

"Only where genius is the dividing and distinctive characteristic." After a severe and bitter struggle, he said at last, "*I*, for *one*, claim no superiority as to mere art to the man who grains and varnishes your house doors! See, what a failure I have made in this picture which I undertook with such mistaken confidence in my own powers, and for which I have been base enough to accept part payment in advance! It is poor—it is flat—it is wretched in all but the composition—and even that supremely graceful grouping I owe to the suggestion of another, a little milliner, or actress, or grisette perhaps, to whom God has given the painter's eye denied to *me*. Were I to do what I *ought* to do, and owe to you, to myself, and, above all, to Mademoiselle Cluche, I would dash my brush across the senseless, enamelled surface, and erase forever from my canvas the wretched snuff-box type of effigy in which I have dared to endeavor to enshrine a goddess. Yes, Madame, I *would* like to give up the practice of my art—*trade*, rather let me call it in such hand as mine—and take the spade from the hands of one of your slaves, so that I might at least accomplish some genuine thing, and learn to be useful, as I can lay claim to no higher vocation."

So saying, he covered his face with his hands, and tears might have been seen flowing over his fingers—tears of mortification, disappointment, pain.

The hands were gently taken down, and the pale and tear-stained face exposed to view, while Mrs. Thermor, calm, yet pitying and tender, stood above him. The burst of passion had electrified her for a moment, but this phase of feeling was over.

"You have excited yourself too much to-day by recounting that sad story of your early love," she said, gently. "Believe me, you underrate your own genius, Mr. Rivers. The only objection that can be urged against your portrait is, that it is too beautiful for me."

"Too beautiful for you!" and he raised his quivering hands, which she had now relinquished. "Oh, had my pencil been dipped in the many-tinted fires of the setting sun, it could not have produced anything so bright, so glorious! As to that story of my vapid youth—that retrospect of what was never more than a dream—how could you suppose for a moment that it stirred me in any way? It was related to amuse, to divert, you—nothing more—to make you forget, as you have not lately seemed to do, the dreariness of a tête à tête in my atelier, for you avoid me, Mrs. Thermor—I cannot remain blind to this—and I am withering heart and soul beneath your neglect, your scorn, in comparison to which the ghastly scar left years ago by my adversary is as nothing; yet how have I offended, save in the depth and silence of my respectful and unobtrusive devotion, still as it has been and strong as death."

With her color coming and going, her bosom heaving with its variety of novel and conflicting emotions, her hazel eyes, usually so softly bright, opening and contracting as those of a frightened child might do, Mrs. Thermor stood and listened to this unexpected outburst.

At last she said: "I am sure, Mr. Rivers, I have never had the least idea of being offended with you or treating you with scorn. On the contrary, I admire and respect you extremely; and you must remember that to sleep in the small recitation-room, where Miss Minande

assisted Elsie to hang the white-muslin tent-draperies over the bed, and arrange the oak cottage set, purposely procured from Baltimore, was your own choice; for I offered you my very best bedroom—not only because you were the friend of Countess Cluche, but because I honor genius for its own sake extravagantly, and wished to make you perfectly comfortable at Birk-braes, as Mr. Thermor, were he living, would wish to see you made, for he was the soul of hospitality.”

Under this slow, cold dropping rain of commonplaces, the exudations of her inmost nature, mayhap, Mr. Rivers gradually recovered his composure, with which he parted no more while the interview continued. He was as completely cooled and refreshed by the process as is the poor young victim of champagne, whose associates wisely and benevolently put his head under a hydrant before taking him home to an expectant wife, sister or mother, as the case may be, but the cure was not more permanent.

As soon as Mrs. Thermor had departed a fresh burst of agony and reaction of passion took demoniacal possession of poor Mazon, who, forgetting all but his own disappointment and adoration, threw himself wildly upon his knees before the gothic velvet chair in which Mrs. Thermor had been sitting for her picture, a fixture in the atelier, and burying his face in the folds of her cashmere shawl, he covered it with tears and kisses and anguish. All this was perfectly natural and unaffected, but had he been a professed actor instead of the artless Bohemian he was, he could not have done a more artistic thing; that is, had he been clairvoyant enough to anticipate the prompt return of Mrs. Thermor.

Before that somewhat agitated lady got half-way across

the garden, under the shade of her large green parasol, she remembered that she had forgotten her cashmere in the atelier, and reflected with horror on the possible assault her parrot might make upon it in the absence of the artist, so that she turned on her steps (being desirous, besides, to have a final kind word and smile with Mr. Rivers, whose mood she sincerely pitied) and softly opening the door of the pavilion beheld him in the attitude and condition above described!

As gently as she had entered she withdrew, quite unperceived by the occupant of the atelier, still pursuing his devotions before the chair and shawl. About fifteen minutes later, when Mr. Rivers had come to his feet again, and was slowly pacing the apartment, walking down his irritation in a way he had often tried before and found efficient, he was startled by the appearance of Rena, Mrs. Thermor's own maid, a very pretty yellow slave of about thirty, who, with many profound courtesies and much circumlocution, apologized for "'sturbing him by comin' for mistress' Ingy shawl, what her sister, Miss Genie Clutch, sent her all the way from Paris, long before she was married, and of which she thought a heap, but somehow Diamond had the greatest spite against that shawl, 'specially the fringe part, and was always tryin' his best to 'stroy it; so mistress 'sposen' as usual Diamond had hid in the pavilion had done sent her to fotch it, and her best compliments to Mr. Rivers, and 'pologizes for interrupting his brown studies, and would he come to lunch, or should she fix up and bring him a waiter wid her own hands 'dat nebber did much work of any kind, for she had de best and most indulgent mistress in de whole bay settlement, and dat pictur was jes

de very spit ob her and Miss Genie too, when ole Captain Kavanaugh 'knowledged dat, cross-grained as he was, for he told his body servant Coriandrew so, when he was fixen of his best brown wig, an' 'taint often the ole captain hab a good word for black or white"—and so on ad infinitum, until Rivers desperately concluded to accept a glass of lemonade and slice of sponge-cake rather than stand twenty minutes more of Rena's shower-bath style of harangue, and to bolt in the interval of her departure with the shawl and the delinquent Diamond (who really was hidden behind it) and her return with the proposed waiter of refreshments.

Two hours later, there still wanting some hours to dinner, which was served punctually at six, in the newest Baltimore style, with a stationary dessert in the centre, and after a stroll on the beach, which greatly soothed and refreshed him, albeit the sun shone hot, he was glad to partake of the pickled oysters, sliced bread and butter, biscuit and tongue, as well as lighter things, which, in the fulness of her good feeling, Rena had brought to him and left unbidden on his table, suddenly adding as she went her way to herself,

"He ain't much of an eater nor a drinker, neider, dat's true; an' he pays well as he goes, which I can't say for all as comes here wid big trunks and plenty of airs and graces an' money in der purses—it shan't be my fault nor Juba's if he starves to death at Birk-braes; 'sides dat, mistress sets so much store by him."

That afternoon, at the dinner toilet of her mistress, Rena, as usual, amused her with her speculations on divers matters; among others she wondered who sewed on Mr. Rivers' buttons and strings, as he seemed mighty

"hard up" for clothes sometimes, and wouldn't wait for Aunt Cynthy to mend them with the rest, on Saturdays; and yet, all the same, some one had repaired them very nicely over night in the laundry.

"Who on earth can it be, Rena? You must find out. I am really afraid it is poor Mr. Rivers, himself, put to such dreadful straits—and in my house, too, where the maids are in one another's way, and could so readily repair his clothing. I ought to have thought of that long ago—but I am so forgetful, and take it too much as a matter of course that every one is at home at Kirk-braes."

"Well, mistress, ef the trufe mus' be told," said Rena, peering round the chair into the face of Mrs. Thermor, "we all 'specks that Miss Minande Mademoiselle, as Miss Genie calls her; dey do say dat dem two French folk am engaged to be married, and jus tends like to strangers for grandeur's sake; case Jemima, she saw Miss Minande sewing up de tail part of Mr. Rivers' gray linen blousey last night, all unbeknownst, when he was in the parlor, all alone by herself down in the 'telier or school-room, I don't know zactly which to call it now—with a sigh—an' she lef two bran new handkerchiefs on his bureau which she was all day hemming and marking with her own black hair. Jemima seed her pulling it out by de roots to make letters wid, jus like Miss Genie did for Mars Ruff wen he went to sea las' time; an' mighty purty dem black letters is I tells you, on dat sheer white lawn cambric. Jemima seed her when she cut the handkerchiefs off dat long piece in her trunk, and she says de fine lace she's got rolled up dar would make your har stand up on your head—as to shop-liftin'"—

“Which you are doing now in a very different spirit, Rena,” interrupted her mistress, sharply. “Don’t pull so, if you please; remember you are not combing Colonel Kavanaugh’s wig, or the poodle! I am very glad indeed that Miss Minande *has* taken pity on poor Mr. Rivers, and condescends to look into his wardrobe, which it was surely not my affair to do, though I wish he could have asked my servants to repair his clothes and meet his wants. I hope you don’t forget his towels, Rena?”

“No, indeed, ma’am; he has enough an’ to spar, even for his sea-bath, which he takes every day; an’ Juba do say he kin swim like a fish; but as I was sayin’ about dat Miss Minande—”

“Once for all I want no spy set in my house, Rena, on the actions of my guests. Let Miss Minande and her affairs alone from this hour, and mind your own. I observe that my wardrobe is in sad disorder of late, and I think I can account for it now. You are too busy watching other people, I fear, to attend to your own affairs. All those dresses want pressing, and it is time to do up my summer laces—quite time.” So poor Rena was effectually silenced, but not until she had left her sting to rankle, for, careless as Mrs. Thermor believed herself to be of the intercourse of Mr. Rivers and her governess, or of any wish to monopolize him, she yet found herself anxious, sleepless, watchful under the thought that there might be going on, before her very eyes, blinded by vanity and over-confidence, a desperate conspiracy against her peace—some underhand proceeding, of which she might possibly be the dupe!

But the more she reflected on this subject the more convinced she became that, if attachment there were at



all, it was on Miss Minande's part toward Mr. Rivers, whose unquestionable agitation and emotion in her presence she could only attribute to one cause, and resolve to one motive.

"He loves me," she said, "as I have never been loved since the days of faithless Ernest Ravenshaw, and I could love him in spite of the sneers of Colonel Kavanaugh, that old despotic dragon, in whom my husband vested entirely too much authority. (He to approve, indeed, if ever I saw fit to marry again, or to hold up half my income and possess Birk-braes himself for life, unless the aspirant were one I had long known, respectable, rich, and of suitable age!!); or even the remarks of the empty, hollow world, in which 'I live, move,' alas! 'and have my being.'"

"It is a very strange condition of things, though," she continued, "when one comes to reflect about it. 'To love or not to love—that is the question!' I feel within myself a power—which really makes me imagine myself much stronger than most women who usually *fall* into love, I believe—'*nolens volens*'—pretty much as I drop Diamond in his tub. I must be rather superior to the common weaknesses of my sex—though I never thought of such a thing before; never set up for an '*esprit fort*' in my life—but the fact is, widows, like the nations of Europe, must keep up the balance of power. The boys—(they would rebel, of course, incited by old Kavanaugh), Birk-braes—a residence not to be sneezed at—the smiles of society and fifteen thousand dollars a year (all for myself and Genie—the Government clothes those scapegrace boys—besides their portion was set apart from the first, and Genie alone is left in the hollow of

my hand.) "Let us begin again," counting on her graceful-moulded fingers, as she enumerated advantages first, disadvantages later.

"The boys—Birk-braes and fifteen thousand a year—besides carriages, servants, cows, horses, sheep, a chapel, yacht and two sailing-boats—and society *ad libitum*—and of the best as it is. Against *Rivers, Romance*, ten thousand a year, and neither house nor lands to call my own, nor slaves, nor old Kavanaugh to plague me, nor Genie to love me, unless she chose to cling to her mother (which I know she would do), the sneers of society and life in Paris 'au troisieme,' with Bohemianism to dine on Sunday! Ye gods! I fear I cannot face the music! yet it is very tempting, very, to be so loved, so adored, so worshipped; say what one will, it is very fascinating. And day by day his sweet, emotional face grows into my very brain," and she veiled her eyes with her hand. "I dream of him even—I who rarely dream—dream as I do not like to dream, as I must not, of his vows, of his caresses, he that never yet but once has dared to press his lips to my hand, and then was reprov'd, nay, repuls'd sharply. My life has been so calm, so 'fancy free' hitherto, almost without emotion, save when my children were born, and when my husband died, and now to be sleepless, miserable, hollow-eyed perhaps; all about that insinuating, inefficient, insignificant artist and his little scrap of sentiment and romance, is too bad.

"As to Miss Minande, she is welcome to him if she wants him; and I do believe she could charm a bird from a bough if she tries with those eyes of hers that always seem to me looking through a mask; and I believe nothing would more sincerely relieve me than to

find out that they were secretly married, and had come here to enact a farce, make a fool of Mademoiselle Cluche and me, which I am half inclined to think I am without their assistance," she added with a sad smile, succeeded by a little nervous laugh—then a piteous groaning sigh.

"Heigh, ho! the matter must be ended; that is the long and the short of it. I find myself growing indifferent about everything except that man and his atelier, which I am resolved to visit no more alone—no, never! after the scene of yesterday. If he wants to see me tête-à-tête, he will have to come to my parlor like other gentlemen, dressed in that elegantly fitting suit of fine black cloth he wears to dinner; not in his picturesque breakfast blouse in which he looks like Raphael. There never was anything so graceful and pliable as his figure, certainly. I suppose it is that gymnasium training he tells of in Paris; but what to me are a man's waist and shoulders, feet, hands, and legs, if he is not of my class?"

"The 'Duchess of Bohemia!' I know who would give me that title as soon as I changed my name from Thermor to Rivers, and who is just like horrid old Doctor Sam Johnson with Mrs. Thrall after she married Prozzi, with whom she found herself happy for the first time in her life, however! Come, let me think," and she turned on her lace-trimmed pillow—for this unspoken soliloquy was uttered internally, after she had retired to her bed, in which Eugenie was nestling fast asleep, and laid one hand gently as if in benediction on the shoulder of the child she loved better than her own life.

Yet the glamour was fast creeping over her, which

come when it will, soon or late, continues, like the influence of morphine, to lull to rest all the sterner moral faculties and yield the kingdom of the brain to a new and irresistible sense of enjoyment, a very tyrant while its power endures. The awaking to the consciousness of such love as this reminds me of the condition of Gulliver when he recognized that he was bound hand and foot by a thousand tiny filaments applied by pigmy hands, which, each easily broken in turn, could have been resisted when they were being bound around him, but impossible of severance now; unless by such mighty effort as endangered life and limb.

I forget at this moment whether it was by the consent of the multitude or such endeavor that he was freed at last; but in either case entreaty, pain, mortification or agonizing effort to the redemption of the dreamer who has delivered himself to the wily power of Cupid.

Blind, indeed! there never was a sharper, more vigilant little god, nor one who took more Yankee advantages over his victims than this same Dan Cupid, and those who read Greek mythology in the right spirit will be convinced that it was in a vein of excessive irony he was represented as bandaged!

## CHAPTER IV.

Thy words convince me—all my doubts are vanished.

TRANSLATION FROM ESCHYLUS.

A friend should bear his friend's infirmities.—SHAKESPEARE.

Thou art the friend

To whom the shadows of long years extend.—BYRON.

MRS. THERMOR appeared at the breakfast table on the morning after her somewhat sleepless night, whose commencement we have noted in the end of our last chapter, somewhat the worse for her solitary vigil, and so languid and listless that Colonel Kavanaugh, who always sat at the foot of the table and enacted the role of "paterfamilias," attacked her loudly on the subject of her pale cheeks and absence of mind.

She had sent him green tea instead of black, had put two lumps of sugar and ten drops of cream too much in his matutinal beverage, and as it was one of her pleasant peculiarities to be considerate of every taste and to remember the several requisitions of each guest, this seemed to him to argue a melancholy aberration of some sort that ought at once to be corrected and attended to.

After despatching Coriander, his own particular satellite, to change his cup of tea, which caused a delay not favorable to his composure, he proceeded in the interval of its arrival to his revenge.

"You are not well, Isabella, this morning—that is certain. I shall ask Mandamus to look in upon you as he passes, if you are not speedily better. It will be quite a triumph for him to have to order blue pill, perhaps, for his Hebe, as he calls you—our Goddess of Health, you know, Mrs. Lindsay—of the Bay settlement. I have

been afraid of this, Isabella—miasma, of course—ever since you had that salt marsh drained,” and he screwed his face into a malignant smile.

“It was a very good place for plover, I know,” she said dryly, “and convenient to the house for shooting; but I prefer it as a meadow, and prefer cows to snipe, and those who set forth from Birk-braes on fowling expeditions will have to go a little farther to find them, that is all.”

She had not forgotten yet that tall hat which had passed so quietly by the window of the pavilion on the previous day, nor the suspicious glance that had been shot from beneath it into the artist’s sanctum.

“The tone of your voice, more than anything else, convinces me of your indisposition, Isabella—you know how quick I am to discover when my habitues are out of sorts—it is both weak and querulous this morning, which is always a sign of sickness, where one has naturally a sound, sweet and healthy utterance like yours. I am really anxious about you, quite concerned,” and his green eyes twinkled.

“Thank you; but your anxiety is entirely thrown away (Coriander, get hot rice-cakes for your master), and I will ask you as a favor to defer any further expression of it until a more convenient season. It is quite a wet blanket on the most social meal of the day (Juba, the reed-birds quick to Colonel Kavanaugh.)”

“Sly puss, as if I did not see through her like rock crystal!” thought the crusty old bachelor, who, with plenty of means of his own, preferred to rusticate at Birk-braes and save his money for Genie—to lead the hotel life of Baltimore, with no one to love, praise, peck at and meddle with.

"Would to heaven he had a wife and fifteen children," moaned poor Mrs. Thermor at the bottom of her heavy, dissatisfied heart, as she met the small, penetrating eyes, which, as plainly as if lips had spoken it, conveyed the substance of his dry soliloquy.

She could imagine no other way of getting rid of her incubus than by devoting him to Hymen. It never entered her kind heart to wish him a greater evil, and as he was made her adviser and co-executor by her husband's will, with the injunction that he should continue to reside in the family as he had always done, she knew no better way of consigning him to the furies.

It had never entered Colonel Kavanaugh's hairless, but certainly not brainless, head that the widow of his friend would marry *him*, but he inwardly determined, if he could honorably prevent it, she should espouse no other. He had no wish to deprive her of Birk-braes by conniving at a messalliance on her part, and yet to leave Birk-braes and his adopted family was no part of his intention.

He took good care of her money and her domain as far as she would allow him to interfere, made her a handsome present once a year, kept his own horses, groom and body servant, and, for his own sake, her cellar well supplied with wines—of which he drank each day in a moderate way—never for a moment affecting ownership therein, as a snob would have done.

He was tall, gaunt, meagre and unusually homely, but had the air of a gentleman and the military bearing of the officer that he was. Well-read, as the word goes, and well-bred, as the word does not go, for he was addicted to hard swearing, was prejudiced, irritable and

egotistical, yet thoroughly "au fait;" detecting the slightest evidence of a want of "usage du monde" in others and ruthlessly resenting every breach of strict decorum as a personal affront.

His swearing, like his smoking, was never done in the presence of ladies, for whom he affected, if he did not feel it, a profound respect; a veneration so excessive that it did not prevent the witty Mrs. Q. from saying that as extremes meet it almost seemed to her to border on contempt, and be a mere manner of expressing contempt safely.

He listened with a sort of pitying sympathy to the opinions of sensible women, and a smile on hearing them expressed; that kind of odd surprise we feel when children say unexpected smart things. That an original idea should ever emanate from such a source was an incomprehensible state of affairs to him; and when he heard any female utterance that he could not place immediately, he would ask in a patronizing way whence it was obtained; and if assured of its entire originality, smile incredulously and shake his head in a most aggravating and exasperating manner.

He was heard to say repeatedly that the highest range of a woman's inventive power was in the fabrication of millinery, and that whenever she attempted art beyond the combinations of costume she was at sea, and even unsexed, and from that hour deprived of interest and individuality. Yet notwithstanding this deep-seated conviction of the entire inferiority of woman to man in every aspect save one, he was unusually devoted to female society, admired fine and fashionable attire with enthusiasm and marvelled much at the mysterious garments and exquisite adjustment of form and color that distin-



guished well-dressed ladies, and which he termed successful elaborations of their only art, in his peculiar mode of classifying this department.

If he respected and feared any woman living it was the good-natured Mrs. Thermor, who had been obliged in self-defence to assert her independence in the most emphatic way, before she could venture to give an order in her own house beyond her dining-room, invite a guest or take a trip of pleasure, after her husband's death.

He had at last, however, very unwillingly capitulated—finding her quite determined—and it was now understood that there were limits he should not pass openly, prowl, peck, peep and satirize as he might and would covertly.

When she had most effectually parried his attempt at annoyance and sent back his shaft by a certain contemptuous curl of her short, scarlet upper lip, which he knew the meaning of as well as if she had said, "you have gone far enough, you know there are limits assigned to you," she rallied sufficiently to announce the gracious intention that in acquiescence with the prayers of two of her young guests she had been meditating and maturing for several days, with a smiling face and an eye from which all clouds were suddenly dispersed. "And now, ladies and gentlemen, I have the honor to invite you all, as I shall do many who are absent at this moment, to 'the feast of roses'—to be held in honor of Miss Rose Blamire and Miss Clara Lindsay, my petitioners, at our castle of Birk-braes on the 14th day of June, or rather the evening thereof, at which we expect to welcome all the charming people we have seen described in Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and many outsiders from the pages of Lord

Byron, or Southey, or any other famed poet or author who has created oriental characters. To these the invitation is limited. The decoration of the ball-room and parterre will be in accordance with this idea, and the guests are entreated to use as far as possible the poetic language that has been assigned to these exquisite creations. It is now the 10th of May, and it is supposed that time enough has been afforded to permit very perfect preparations for the approaching festival. Further invitations will be issued at the close of the week to those at a distance. Thus ends the programme."

Colonel Kavanaugh sat with his mouth half open, his eyes distended, and an upraised knife and fork in either hand, which position he would have thought unpardonable in any other offender.

"The woman is crazy," he muttered; "what will she do next? What would poor Thermor say, indulgent as he was, to such a vagary? What will Mrs. Grundy say?—the only person whose opinion *she* cares about."

But he said nothing loud enough to be heard, and fell to work doggedly on a fresh mutton-chop that had just been brought to him "en papillote," as he best liked them, served by Coriander.

"To Colonel Kavanaugh I assign the character of 'Fadladeen,'" said Mrs. Thermor, with a gracious sweep of the head in the direction of her foe; "and to Mr. Rivers the simple and less interesting part of 'Feramorz'—the artist, methinks, can easily simulate the 'Poet,'" and she smiled benignly upon her adorer.

"I suppose I may be allowed to be the 'Veiled Prophet of Korassan,'" said merry Lionel Blamire, "or perhaps Colonel Kavanaugh would prefer."

"No, sir! no. I have nothing to cover up or conceal—not even my honest ugliness," said that officer sternly; "such farces are not fit for old people to take part in, either women or men—and women, we know, are thought to be by the best judges old at forty; even the best looking begin to break considerably before that time." Here he smiled scowlingly at Mrs. Thermor.

"And men have been known to fall into premature dotage before sixty," she retorted, calmly; "even the most sensible are dreadfully tiresome at that age. I think 'Fadladeen' was an exception. He was decidedly the life of the prose part of Lalla Rookh, though insufferably vain and meddlesome."

"Madam, I have forgotten all about 'Fadladeen' and his prosiness, it is so long since I read that bundle of nonsense—only fit for boys and girls—that Tom Moore was once permitted to publish and palm on an indulgent public, long since surfeited with the honey of his strains. But I do remember something of 'Lalla Rookh,' and from what you have said, and from your last appointment, I draw the inference that you mean to personate that absurd and impossible character yourself. Am I correct?"

"You will see when the time comes," she said, smiling, though her lips grew pale—a sign with her of intense displeasure. "In the meantime you, Rose, shall be appointed to take the part of young Nourmahal, which I am sure you will enact beautifully as well as look; and you, Mademoiselle Minande, shall be Namouna, the Enchantress, and the rose-colored veil, unless I wear it, shall be for Clara Lindsay. As ladies of my household I make these appointments. Gertrude and Eugenie shall

be dancing girls, Bayaderes, which gives a wide scope to fancy and costume. For the guests of Birk-braes I think that from my own buried finery of the past all can be equipped."

"Then you will not assume a disguise—take a character, I mean?" asked Colonel Kavanaugh, eagerly. "You, the lady of Birk-braes?"

"Cela depend," she replied carelessly, rising as she spoke; for it was not her wish to set her enemy at rest, as she might easily have done by declaring her intentions.

The party was a pretty thought of Rose Blamire's to whom she especially wished to do honor in her kinsman's house, and it was to gratify her that it was given; for a recent letter had led her to expect her lover, Colonel Stanley, about that time, whose failing health, delicate but not dangerous, had forced him to resign after one or two battles, and give his regiment to other hands. It was hoped that he would enact the part of "Selim," that is, if his wound were sufficiently healed by the time of his arrival; but, in the meantime, the brother and sister were to proceed to Virginia to visit another relative, promising to return a week before the festival.

Cards were immediately ordered and struck in Baltimore, and freely distributed in the Bay settlement, and in that city, distant about twenty miles by water, and a nice little steamboat was to be chartered for the occasion. It was also announced that it would lie all night at the strand, and afford accommodation for many of the gentlemen, while an empty farm house not far from Birk-braes was to be fitted up for the younger ladies; such at least as could not be accommodated at the spacious villa of Mrs. Thermor.

In the meantime the pictures progressed slowly. "Festina lente" seemed indeed the motto at Birk-braes, which Lionel Blamire, with his Scotch notions of bustle and energy, often likened to Thomson's "Castle of Indolence," quoting on occasion some passages therefrom that seemed to his fancy apposite. We venture to transcribe one or two of these which he recited and altered slightly for the benefit of the Enchantress herself:

"It was, I ween, a lovely spot of ground,  
And there a season atween June and May,  
Half pranked with spring—with summer half unbrowned;  
A listless climate made, where, sooth to say,  
No living wight could work, nor cared even for play.  
Thither continual pilgrims crowded still,  
From all the roads of earth that pass thereby;  
The freshness of the valley smote the eye,  
And drew them ever and anon more nigh,  
Till clustering round the enchantress fair they bring."

The alteration was not of moment, for, truth to tell, Mrs. Thermor had never heard there was a wizard in the case instead.

In pursuance of her late determination, Mrs. Thermor appeared no more at the atelier alone, and when Constance or Clara Lindsay failed to accompany her (the first a maiden lady of middle age, the aunt of the two young girls who were to figure at the masquerade, very sensible and clear-sighted) she compelled Eugenie (now very seldom in requisition, for the part she bore in the group of two was very nearly completed) and Mademoiselle Minande to bear her unwilling company. During these sessions she very narrowly observed the manner of the artist toward the governess, and could discover nothing but an amiable condescension or a slight touch of impatience in his mode of treating her.

Mademoiselle, as usual, was quite inscrutable and vigilant, breaking out, however, at times in little bursts of original thought and even enthusiasm, which would have greatly amused and shocked Colonel Kavanaugh, skeptical of all save abject conventionalism as far as women were concerned.

She had views of her own on many subjects—considered marriage in most cases a mere earthly compact—all the more binding that it was a voluntary bargain, and not heaven-compelled—but did conscientiously believe that there were some instances of such sweet and close affinity in married life, that Plato's doctrine of a divided soul finding its severed half on earth instead of heaven, and Swedenborg's conjugal theory seemed verified. All other marriages she considered a mere earthly partnership, that should be honorably fulfilled while the necessity lasted, but could have no force beyond the grave, and might be reasonably dissolved at pleasure.

This utterance was the consequence of an animated discussion between Mrs. Thermor and Mr. Rivers, in which she sided with the artist, but went far beyond him in the eloquence and fervor with which she repudiated all marriages of mere *convenance*.

It was very interesting to observe what a lovely light came into her eyes, and how flame-like was the color which flickered in her usually waxen cheek while her little moods of excitement lasted.

They were soon quieted down, however, and it was curious to note how quietly the features resumed their marble calm, and how sadly the eyes drooped again, as if accustomed to tears over the Penelope's web with which she seemed always engaged when in the presence of others.

Dressed in her simple robes of percale, chiefly blue and white, the unfailing apron, the small bells of gold which tinkled in her ears; cuffs and collars of snowy, glossy linen (then little worn in the United States, and never endurable unless specklessly clean and fresh), with her trim waist, her dainty feet and hands, she looked to perfection the "Fleur de Lis" of the "Mysteries of Paris," and the ideal grisette of the "Wandering Jew," works then making a deep and profound sensation.

Yet her face was not the face of Rigolette, or even "Fleur de Marie," but something higher, stronger, far more cultured than either, in which the extremes of early maidenhood and mature womanhood seemed to blend in some mysterious way so as to puzzle the observer as to whether she had left behind the magical teens or were passing deep in the twenties. It was a mournful face save when she laughed—then the very soul of gayety seemed to pervade every line, every feature thereof, from the strangely flexible and pointed lip, which, almost concealing the two front teeth over which it played, revealed at the sides the coral gums and pearly array, almost to their conclusion. The mouth was a very peculiar one, yet had its own beauty, being clearly cut and singularly expressive, the lower lip firm, yet full enough to counteract the exceeding thinness of the upper, and the whole expression shrewd, yet sweet.

Yet surely Mademoiselle Minande was not a beauty compared to the magnificent Mrs. Thermor, or even to the sweet-pea loveliness of Rose Blamire, or the regular and faultless face of Clara Lindsay. There were, however, strange reserves of power in that peculiar face of hers

beyond all these, that sometimes made her radiantly beautiful for a few brief moments—expressions that, had an artist been able to arrest them on his canvas, might have made both famous.

To these, however, Mrs. Thermor was blind—or it may be that she had no power to awaken them—though there was a little derisive smile on Miss Minande's lips occasionally, and a look of surprise in her large blue eyes, weighed down as these were almost beneath their long, dark lashes at most times, that made her feel that her *gouvernante* was not coolly mechanical and reverential. This she had defined as "peeping through a mask." Still she was very kind, very polite to *Mademoiselle*, as it was her nature and training to be to all about her. She could not have loved herself as much as she did had she been otherwise, for self-complacency takes the place of self-esteem in organizations like her own, and literally grows on what it feeds on—consciousness of proper behavior and the praises of others.

But she always felt a thought more comfortable away from *Mademoiselle Minande* than with her, and had a vague idea that she was more transparent in *Mademoiselle's* eyes than of others.

But she was mistaken. Colonel Kavanaugh, whose influence she derided, saw twice as far into her motives, and knew her far better than she knew herself; while *Mademoiselle* was truly disposed to accept her for what she seemed.

True, she had not been able to shut her eyes to the little flirtation between the young artist and his hostess; and at first she had been, like every one else, amused by it; but now that she saw what a deep root



his passion was taking in his being, and how entirely delusive it was in its character, she could but feel pained and even aggrieved in the contemplation of such approaching misery to one of her own class. "Esprit de corps" was apparently very binding with her, as it is with most artistic women, but he had none of it, as we have seen, and abhorred the brand of "Bohemianism," which he knew clove to him, while he despised as much the counterpart of this title in the opposite sex; the artiste or grisette was alike objectionable to him. He was by birth and breeding a gentleman, we know, and he liked *ladies*, not *lorettes*, grisettes or *gouvernantes*, even if the latter were worthy to be classed with angels. This was his principal weakness—the rock upon which he mainly split—but he had many more, as the reader by this time has no doubt discovered; and yet, inconsistent as it may seem, he was essentially candid, true, and loving in the very moulding of his nature, and constant as well when once his true affections had been reached.

Mrs. Thermor soon wearied of those discussions in which Mademoiselle seemed impelled beyond herself to take a part—always breaking into French, after an unavailing effort to express herself with sufficient fluency in English, which language the young artist understood in all its niceties, even better than his own, so that he would involuntarily respond in his own tongue, and thus Mrs. Thermor found herself at a great disadvantage, both as listener and speaker. It could not be denied that Mademoiselle spoke very beautifully, and expressed herself with the utmost elegance as well as simplicity. "C'est son metier, her trade," said Mrs. Thermor, translating, as usual, with a shrug of her lovely shoulders—

an American shrug—which is simply a little shiver—not the true French shrug—as inimitable as the way they wear their shawls and hold up their dresses out of the mud.

“Madame, c’est vrais,” was the response of the enamored artist; “c’est tout ce qu’elle a enfin, que voulez vous?” and he, too, shrugged with very little more success than his goddess—scarcely understanding what he meant himself.

It occurred to Mrs. Thermor to set Mademoiselle to reading during these sittings, so that at least the pantomime of eyes, which it amused her to keep up with Rivers, should pass unobserved by Mademoiselle. Eugenie, of course, was blind, or supposed to be, through her simplicity; but Mademoiselle saw everything with those large, near-sighted eyes of hers, aided by that spider-like eyeglass, which she would persist in using, balancing it on her pretty little wax-like nose with an address worthy a Japanese juggler.

In vain did Mademoiselle insist that, as she could only read respectably in French, she would infallibly bore and weary the company and monopolize the attention of Monsieur, who *should* be wholly absorbed in his picture, but who would be obliged to listen out of courtesy as her only auditor.

She was assured that Madame enjoyed “la lecture Française above all entertainments,” so she was obliged to read extracts from Lamartine’s Holy Land and Girondists, and from Victor Hugo’s Notre Dame, books she had brought in her trunk for her own edification from the library of her friend, the Countess Cluche, with Madame Burgenheim’s permission.

They all contained the arms of the grim count, and his name written in his own cranky hand, for they were his last purchase; and he had caused them to be read to him by his daughter before he died, partly to go to sleep by, and partly as a means of oppression to her, for their contents to him were wholly uninteresting.

Unwillingly as Mademoiselle began to read as a sedative for the nerves of Mrs. Thermor—something to counteract the effect of the dull buzzing of the blue-flies on the pane, or the bees without at their work of harmless plunder—she soon became, as was her custom to do, deeply absorbed and interested in her occupation. She lost herself in those pure poetic descriptions of Palestine in which Lamartine threw his whole soul, as philosopher, poet, Christian, and her sweet voice revelled in harmony of his euphonious and sonorous phrases, in which he above all French writers has excelled.

The language seemed in his hands a lyre to which he had added new chords of thrilling sweetness, power, and pathos, and sometimes the tears fell fast from those large, luminous eyes over those passages which treated of his child, his love and admiration for her, his bereavement, his despair.

Nor was she wrong in one (presumptuous as it had seemed to Mrs. Thermor) prophecy—as to Mr. Rivers and his necessitated attention. Every pulse of his artistic heart, open to all sweet and solemn influences, vibrated beneath the tones of her exquisitely musical, modulated and passionate voice.

He, too, was lost in attention; for these books, and such as these, were sealed treasures to his intellect until now. He, too, bestowed the tribute of his tears on the

death of the lovely maiden, the despair of the poet father and the meek and loving mother, who, in the land of the holy sepulchre, had been deprived of all save one hope—one solemn presence—which to the end of time must sanctify its sands.

Eugenie, even, who understood so imperfectly the words of those delightful volumes, would sit listening, with clasped hands and uplifted eyes, to the mere music of Mademoiselle's words, and would gush over with irrepressible sympathy when she saw the large, bright tears falling on the pages, without interrupting the progress of the reader or breaking the sustained timbre of her voice.

"She has wept a great deal, been very miserable, no doubt; has the custom of tears, and has been obliged to command herself thoroughly, or she could never weep like that," thought Mazon. "Good God! what power she has! Did I possess one tithe of her self-command, I should not be what I am—a cipher, a mere incubus, a ball at the foot of a proud woman; a ball waiting, patiently waiting, to be kicked aside!"

His respect for Mademoiselle Minande rose daily, and just in proportion to this esteem for her increased his wild, hopeless passion for Mrs. Thermor.

And yet he saw, or thought he saw, that she loved him—this glorious dame, reserved and shy as she had become, and fearful of encountering him alone.

These, he had heard, were signs of female affection, no less worthy of note than the flushing cheek, the luminous eye, the tremulous tones which greet the welcome lover.

....Would that he could ask counsel of Mademoiselle

Minande—wisest and most cautious of maidens—she who had by her own acknowledgment so deeply suffered by the hands of ruthless man; and by this she meant—of course she meant—disappointment in her moderate style of love and all its depressing consequences. She who had come through the ordeal so pure and true; for to see her was to believe in her truth and purity, and to know her was to recognize her courage and independence. Even in the very way, when he came to reflect on it, in which she had spoken of Countess Cluche—her patroness and his—the fearless way in which she had spoken manifested what truth and courage were in her; for how could she know that these words might not be repeated again to the injury of her own prosperity, and recoil upon her like red-hot hail from artillery which has fallen into the possession of the enemy? How could she tell?

“Sent her to exile, had she? the tyrannical old maid! No doubt from sheer jealousy, either of her powers and accomplishments, or of her hold on the affections of some one of her own provincial lovers. No wonder the poor little thing was lonely and reserved—no wonder she clung to the phantom of ‘Compatriotism’ between them with such pathetic confidence. He knew she felt a disinterested pride in his good appearance—that little country-woman of his, who out of her scanty store had wrought him two handkerchiefs, finer than any he had possessed for years, and mended his clothing so nicely and delicately that he never knew where it was done or when she did it. Besides, did she not show rare discretion when she restored to him alone and in no other presence the little opal ring which she had found by the guelder

rose, near his window? Not a question as to who had given it to him, or a look of surprise even when he said, as he received it, 'It would become your slender white finger much more than mine, Mademoiselle Marie; but I cannot offer it to you as beseems me to do, for it is the gift of one very dear in the past.'

"'It is well to keep it, then, for the past is precious,' she said, simply, 'and I do not wear rings, you see, except this, which is the present of a playmate,' and she held up the little, absurd glass seal, with a gravity that showed how she valued it. Certainly hands more perfect and small had never been seen out of marble than hers, and he had admired them in the abstract, as artists are privileged to admire.

"You have beautiful hands, Mademoiselle Marie," he said gently; "have they ever been modelled?"

"Never but once," she had replied; "but if you would like to make use of them in your art, they are at your service. One should not be selfish, you know, about such accidents," and she laughed her merry, sparkling laugh, in such contrast with her expression in repose.

"She has no vanity," he thought, "no coquetry, and what is a woman without these? No capacity left for affection beyond duty and gratitude. I doubt whether she knows the meaning of the sublime word, passion, save in its abstract sense. I suppose some humdrum engagement with a miller or actor, perhaps, has been broken off by a cruel brother or father, and this she calls disappointment; or that the old maid who sent her here was jealous without sufficient cause. I wish I knew: I could then better appreciate her as a confidante.

My heart will break as it is; but there is something about her that keeps me in bounds all the time—something strong, cold, pure, deep, like a bridge of ice with a rapid stream beneath it.”

In the arduous struggle of feeling in which he found himself involved, and in the evident withdrawal of Mrs. Thermor from their former familiar intercourse, the society of Mademoiselle, which cost him not an effort, became the chief resource if not consolation of Mazon Rivers. He enjoyed her efficiency, her repose, her enthusiasm—for she possessed all these in such harmony that the variety they afforded her character was rather felt than noted; but above all else, her rare and wonderful moods and sphered and perfected thoughts and opinions on all subjects surprised and held him intellectually her captive, and unconsciously to himself moulded and uplifted his own understanding, long steeped in Bohemianism.

His mind was naturally a very bright and susceptible one, but he had committed the fatal error of mistaking an inclination for a gift, and he had before him only the future of a second-rate artist, instead of the real life he might otherwise have had.

One day, in the course of a conversation in which he was lamenting the enforced necessity of his association with men of his own order, Miss Minande said earnestly:

“Why not break away at once, then, from the atelier and try some other undertaking? Great painters shake off Bohemianism as the lion shakes the dew drops from his mane when the sun rises and it is time for him to set forth on his chase—but this petty artists never do; they remain in the shadow, as I have observed, with the

wolves and the jackals, and are Bohemians to the end."

"Then you do not think," he said, with evident pique, notwithstanding his humble estimate of his own powers, "that I shall ever rise to distinction?"

"Not as an artist, Monsieur; but there are other paths to success"—and she hesitated.

"C'est de la gloire qu'il s'agit, n'est ce pas?" he answered sullenly, or rather asked, for he thirsted for fame at this time as never before in his life had he craved it, for the sake of the woman he loved, and he did not like the colder word, success.

"La gloire n'est que pour les grandes et les malheureux," she retorted, evasively; "Mais de"—

"Ah, a peddler may be successful, you know, or a trapper, or a fisher, but what comfort would there be in such ignominious success to a proud man?" he asked.

"So may a gentleman and a Christian in his quiet and honorable path. It is much to deserve to be enrolled among these, and you, I think, are both, Monsieur Mazon."

It was the first time she had called him by his Christian name, even with the prefix of Monsieur, and it drew him near to her that she did so. He took her tiny hand, as he had never dared to do that of his adored Isabella, and for one moment it was surrendered to his grasp, then firmly but gently withdrawn.

"You are like a good little sister to me," he said in some confusion—"et pour cela, je vous aime."

Had he said these words in English the meaning would have been widely different, of course, for we Anglo-Saxons make stern distinctions between the words



like and love, but they mean the same thing in French, as we all know, unless emphasized with tender looks and sighs, none of which were mingled in this brotherly declaration.

“Merci, Monsieur,” said Mademoiselle Marie, as she had once before said, but this time without raising her eyes. “Le bon Dieu vous dit que nous sommes tous freres et sœurs.”

It was a pleasant way of turning the matter off, and Mademoiselle Marie’s hand was grasped no more—until a desperate drowning wretch was drawn by such slight agency from the depths of woe, once again to know the safety and shelter of the shore and the warmth of the revivifying sunshine.

Mademoiselle Minande gave dancing and drawing lessons to Eugenie in the school-room in the morning before the hour of sitting arrived, from which Mr. Rivers was rigorously excluded, but he formed an exalted idea of her grace and perfections of step from her occasional quiet performances in a quadrille and Spanish dance; waltz she would not, deeming it probably unsuitable to her condition to make so decided an exhibition, or perhaps (*quien sabe?*) she was fastidious as to partners!

Her sketches he had never seen, until one day she suddenly laid a sample before him that startled his artistic eye into unqualified admiration, and humbled anew his professional self-estimate.

“This is more than talent; it is genius,” he said fervently; “I never could do anything like that—never.”

She stood beside him silent and pale as a statue, yet she trembled inwardly, if such a thing may be; and the beatings of her heart sounded loudly in her own ears,

though she seemed utterly cold and even indifferent to praises that stirred her as none had ever done before, or haply might ever do again, for this was the first draught of ecstasy she had received from the man she loved.

"You think with me, do you not, that I could never have given such hues of life to those sunset clouds; that quiet rolling sea, or even to the tiny, vivid forms scattered or grouped about the beach, perfect as works of art as well as resemblances (among which I see my own in the foreground, with the hand upon the gunwale of the boat); you agree with my estimate of my own powers and yours, do you not, Miss Minande?"

"I do?" and the words were spoken in low, humble tones, as if deprecating displeasure, while the long, dark lashes veiled the downcast eyes.

"Truth above everything. Hurrah! for my little compatriot," he said, throwing the picture carelessly and far from him, and speaking in a voice husky with mortification.

"Had you said otherwise I should not have believed you. However so, it is better as it is. I am a poor devil, I know, whom even a little *gouvernante* can beat at his own trade—with his own tools; and the worst of it is, I am a swindler to take the money of the Countess Cluche for such work as that," pointing to the picture before him. "Now, hear me, Miss Minande: I cannot give back what I have received. I am too poor. But not another centime of such ill-gotten gains crosses my palm. Say, am I right or wrong?"

"Your work has been estimated for you, Monsieur, and if it is the best you can do you will have done your duty. Who set you this task? She saw, you know,

specimens of your art before committing it to your hands. But you must be governed by your own conscience. No one can advise in a case like this. I, least of all, may take such a liberty."

"Those were copies she saw, mere copies of the old masters," he replied, "and I am successful at imitation, at measurement, at experiments in color; I should no doubt have made a good 'memusier' dyer, or upholsterer, had I not presumed to grapple with the mysteries of the inner temple. I am unsphered, 'petite Marie,' and at sea when I come face to face with nature, yet you command her with that tiny wand of yours to do your bidding! Now tell me why is this—and tell me truly—be not afraid to speak, my gifted child."

"Mon maitre, c'est que vous manquez la genie," and as she spoke she sank on her knees beside her rejected picture and commenced rolling it up softly; then, tying it with her blue neck-ribbon, she rose to her feet again and gently laid it beside him. He had laid his head down, resting his brow on the table as she spoke, and deep and bitter groans were now leaving his lips, while his hands were flung apart before him in an attitude of abandon and despair that to her who witnessed it was inconceivably touching.

She bent above him, and, lightly as a first snow-flake falls on winter's insensible grass, she passed her lips swiftly across his hair, a movement of which he remained unconscious, as she meant that he should do. She would save this noble yet mistaken and misplaced creature, if such strength were hers—she vowed it then and there—and that faint, unshared caress was as a seal and a covenant between them.

But as widely as planet is separated from planet in this system of ours is human mind from human mind, when thought is unrevealed by expression; and as she stood mutely beside him, cold and pale and undemonstrative, how could he guess what storm of emotion, what high resolve were working in her heart, strong and devoted, and, above all, tender and womanly as it was.

After a while he looked up, and, smoothing his disheveled curls, and surely never had he looked so well, smiled in a doleful way that had something quaintly touching about it.

"You will think me an 'enfant gate,' Mademoiselle Minande," he said, "and esteem me no more I fear, or you will believe me envious of your gifts, which I am not, I assure you—only discouraged and somewhat self-dissatisfied."

"I have been waiting, Monsieur, until you should seem better to offer you this little tribute to your worth and ability, that is all. I think I heard you say this was your birthday, Monsieur Mazon; you spoke of it a week ago to Eugenie, she says, and you know it is the custom of our people to offer a slight courtesy on such occasions. I made this sketch on purpose for this anniversary—may you know many more!"

And she was gone, without noticing his apology or waiting for his reply. Again Mazon Rivers unrolled the wonderful bit of drawing and water-color which would have made the fortune of a professional painter in the eyes of a connoisseur; and again he drew the contrast between the genius of this unpretending girl and talent such as was his own—limited, decent, unprogressive talent—which, were it to live a hundred years,

would never produce the wondrous aloe flower of genius on the summit of its stem of mediocrity.

His resolution was formed then and there to relinquish his profession and to bind shoes, or to roll hats, or to mend old china, so that he did either aptly and honestly, rather than be a pretender and a flatterer on the path he had trodden in vain.

His picture was completed nearly, and on it he had done his best, stiff and lifeless, as it was in his own eyes; but he would leave unattempted the remainder of the order of Mademoiselle Cluche, and touch no more of that money which now bore the taint of charity, since he felt that he had not earned it by any merit of his own, strive though he might have done and had done zealously.

A few days would determine his career; in the meantime he must continue to suffer and deplore his own folly, and consent blindly in worship at a shrine on which, like the altar of Cain, no fire had yet come down to prove his sacrifice accepted.

## CHAPTER V.

Think not I love him though I ask for him,  
'Tis but a foolish boy ; yet he talks well.—SHAKESPEARE.

She bids me hope, and in that charming word  
Has peace and transport to my soul returned.—LORD LYTTLETON.

One hour of such bliss is a life ere it closes,  
'Tis one drop of fragrance from thousands of roses.—P. M. WETMORE.

What sweet delirium o'er his bosom stole.—BEATTIE'S MINSTREL.

IT was very evident to Mrs. Thermor that her strategy had been successful, and that poor Mr. Rivers was quite crushed and cured by her proceedings, so that she determined, on the first fitting occasion that presented itself, to raise up his broken spirit again, and convince him that her regard was undiminished, even though adverse fate might separate them as lovers.

There was, indeed, a blank in her own being, which she could fill in no possible way since her adorer had ceased to intrude upon her his presence and his sighs, and to see him sitting as now he did, day after day, hour after hour, in the honeysuckle arbor in the centre of the parterre, engaged in deep conversation with, or reading aloud to, that Marie Minande, with her eternal embroidery, out of those absurd volumes of hers, no doubt, which she had insisted upon boring every one to death with at the sittings (no longer necessary now, for a hastily improvised lay figure wore the velvet dress and laces, and did service for Mrs. Thermor) was, to say the least of it, horribly aggravating to her feelings! He amused, he delighted her, that artist youth, and she was never so happy as in his presence. Why should she give him up,

then, just to please cruel old Kavanaugh and circumspect Constance Lindsay and crafty Mademoiselle, half in love with him herself, and dying to be married no doubt, and open a "Parisian Pension!" No, she would do no such ridiculous thing, especially as she had given him a severe lesson, which he had patiently received and doubtless profited by. At all events, she would afford him another trial she was resolved, and so thoroughly test his patience and her own courage.

The occasion soon enough presented itself which was to restore Mazon Rivers to a measure of his old contentment—nay, elevate him far above it in the nature of events, unforeseen at the moment, and most fortuitous.

An informal invitation from Mrs. Donaldson, a pleasant neighbor, forwarded through her pretty young daughter Lucy (who rode over on her white pony for the purpose, before breakfast), to Mrs. Thermor and her friends, asking them to partake at Deansford of the first strawberries of the season, had reached her on the morning of the 20th of May, which she determined to make her means of reparation.

Strawberries were always late at Birk-braes, owing to the situation of the garden, and it had been the custom of Mrs. Donaldson for years to anticipate their tardy appearance on her friend's domain in this manner, and return, by her simple annual entertainment of good-will, the many attentions she received throughout the year at the hands of Mrs. Thermor. She was herself a widow with several children, but not of the gay sort, and she lived a secluded, dependent, yet contented life in the old family homestead, with her father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Dean, an aged but charming couple.

The place itself was like a peep at Paradise; the venerable gray house, spacious but rambling, was buried among forest trees and stood in a broad green terrace, supported by a gray-stone coping, relieved by urns at stately intervals. The lawn and gardens were exquisitely kept in true English style, and the polished floors of the halls of entrance, stairs, and corridors breathed the best spirit of Virginia housewifery. All was simple, frugal, unadorned, for there was no great wealth to lavish in luxury; but the most exquisite neatness and taste pervaded every detail of furniture or table. And the parterres were as beautiful as a dream.

It was to this characteristic and enchanting spot that Mrs. Thermor determined to transport Mr. Rivers, so that their reconciliation might be perfected in the presence of unobserving strangers—for she knew how little of the world's guile and suspicion was to be found among the denizens of Deansford.

Fortunately for the success of Mrs. Thermor's plan, Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay, with Clara, their elder and more vigilant daughter, had gone to Baltimore for a few days, and Miss Constance Lindsay, her early friend, was indisposed. Colonel Kavanaugh had gone off duck-shooting in the salt marshes, and would be absent a day or two, she knew, and the Blamires were already on their Virginia tour.

She would take Gertrude Lindsay and Eugenie, and offer Mr. Rivers the remaining seat in the spacious carriage, for they would take the coach on this occasion, owing to the necessity of a return by night. As for Mademoiselle Minande, she might take a holiday.

Accordingly while Mr. Rivers was touching his dra-



peries and anathematizing his lay figure—after the school hours were over—so that he was sure to be alone—for Mademoiselle rarely went to the atelier now, preferring “the pleached arbor,” as Beatrice did, to any windowed chamber in the month of May—Rena appeared, bearing in her hand a little three-cornered pink note, scented with otto of roses, sealed artistically, and directed in a fine Italian hand, which ran as follows :

“Mrs. Thermor will be glad to have Mr. Rivers’ escort to an informal strawberry feast at the house of a neighbor this evening at six o’clock, if he will so far oblige her in the absence of Colonel Kavanaugh.”

The paper remained so long in his hands before he laid it down on the table that it occurred to Rena that Mr. Rivers could not read it, being a Frenchman, and she began to explain matters, little suspecting that every word of its contents had been committed to memory before she spoke, and would have been mutely pressed to his lips and breast but for her presence.

“Mistress has done ’cepted Miss Lucy Donaldson’s invite for this evenin’, and dat note is to ax you to ’company her if you has no ’jections or previous engagements, Mr. Rivers.”

“None at all—none at all”—he said hurriedly, and rousing himself from a reverie—“but stop, I will write,” and taking his pencil wrote a brief acceptance on a scrap torn from the note itself, in a rapid and impulsive hand, which plainly denoted his extreme agitation.

“Beg her to excuse my want of pen, ink and paper, Rena. I would not detain you until I could have procured some from Miss Minande. I have had no occasion to write a line since I came, and forgot to provide

myself. Please say this to your mistress, Rena, in your most polite way, and be good enough to buy some ribbons for yourself with this trifle," handing her a half-eagle out of his slenderly-provided purse, which she received with many "nods, and becks and wreathed smiles," valuing fully as much the attention as the intrinsic worth of the gift.

"Mistress says, in edition, please be ready for dinner at four o'clock to-day on account of dis here sociable party. Mrs. Donaldson is one of de early birds; always has her tea before candle-light, an' de house is dark by ten o'clock."

After delivering herself of this message, she went off well pleased to exhibit her treasure to Juba, her liege lord, friendly to Mr. Rivers also, it may be remembered, as far as his guestship was concerned, but entirely opposed on principle to any particular fancy to any of the "genus homo" on the part of his mistress. So far, and no farther, he struck hands with Colonel Kavanaugh!

"Wat Mistis want wid dat young painter-man heah, any way, Rena, I wants to know," observed Juba, "lef alone draggin' him after in de bes' coach to Deansford dis evenin'? I should dispose she had seen enough of dem sort o' chaps to be thinkin' of heathenly joys by dis time. She, wid two grown-up sons to her back, and Miss Genie old enough to be married herself. It beats me out, I declar, Rena."

"Doesn't you know, Jube, the Countess Cluche done sont dis young artis (dats wat dey call him his name behine his back) to copy off Mistiss and Miss Genie, to be hung up in de king's countin'-house? It's her bounden duty, man, to be polite to him, and she was grievin' herself to death

the oder day over his shirt buttons wat Miss Minande sews on, an' says she to me, 'Rena,' says she, 'has you neglectified his towels or not?' My mistis, indeed, to be named in de same bref wid dat good-lookin', 'flicted boy. I'm astonished at you, Juba; w'en you knows, too, wat de Ruffin blood is, an' wat master was in his way—jest as proud as a turkey-cock."

"Yes, but I waits on de table, Rena," and he shook his knowing head, "an' I sees most everything the wite folks does, an' I tell you, gal, der's many a look an' word shoots by me dat I studies about after meal times dat none of 'em knows I 'serves; an' as sure as you lives, honey, an' hold your own, dat poor young stranger lad am greatly 'fected 'bout mistis, an' I has my own 'spicions about her, too. But I says no more, only I has made up my mine to go down to Deanford dis bery evenin' wid uncle Duff on de carriage-box (Len's breeches done tored any way for 'scuse—he, he!) an' see an' hear all I kin—dat's my retention."

"And to numicate what you catch up to dat old tiptoe tyrant, Colonel Kavanah. I'll bet a guinea egg! Well if you does—go and 'tray my Mistis, Juba—to him or any oder wite man—I'se done wid you forever and a day—you'se mighty black any way, man—any lady ob my color has always her pickens and choosins."

With this threat emphasized by a significant nod of her pretty turbaned head, which Juba knew better than to disregard, Rena sped on her way to deliver to her mistress the message she had received from Mr. Rivers, as well as his hasty note.

Mrs. Thermor read it in silence—but Rena saw that she was well pleased and never had she looked more

lovely than in the azure silk dress and black lace shawl she wore on that afternoon, while her bright curls were overshadowed by the impending brim of the gigantic bonnets then worn, always so disfiguring—and her face was lightly covered by a thule veil which softened while it concealed not her radiant beauty.

Not a word was said to Miss Minande at the table (at which the two young girls and herself were the only persons present besides Mrs. Thermor and Mr. Rivers) of the impending engagement, of which the children at the time were ignorant, but she suspected something unusual from the constraint of manner of both of the parties interested; yet when she saw from the shaded back porch, where she was sitting with her book until the sun should leave her honeysuckle bower in shadow, the coach drive up to the front door (open, as that at the rear of the hall so as to afford her a complete view of the lawn and carriage road), and beheld the two young girls who had holiday that afternoon by request, and Mrs. Thermor in her gay and becoming raiment, step therein, followed by Mazon Rivers, carefully dressed and more than usually debonair and graceful, it must be confessed that her poor little heart sunk to her toes! Great bathos this; yet what so effectually describes that sensation of desperate disappointment that all who feel vividly are conscious of sometimes?

“I have done wrong,” she said—“wrong to lend my countenance to all this—loving him as I do. I have no business here; the whole matter was ill-judged, ill-advised, and for selfish ends. I see it all plainly now. Yet it is too late to draw back, and if power of mine can save him from this double delusion it shall be exercised,

even if it costs me my own happiness. I thought he had confidence in me at least, yet see with what duplicity he has acted—this minim of a dream—for it is no more—a vision from which even if his hopes were gratified—insane as they are—he would awake in a short time to ennui and regret as ineffable as that which consumed the guests of Vathek!

“He—a man of soul and sense—superior to any I have known—of the most subtle sensibility—of the keenest sense of honor—of the most unblemished purity—to dance like a moth right in the flame that must consume him sooner or later, to sell himself for the sheen of silken attire and a position of worldly importance that have dazzled him into subjection! It is not her beauty—no, it is not that—for its early delicacy is gone already—its splendor on the wane—and under this very roof there are faces far more beautiful and forms of finer mould than hers—it surely is not any congeniality of taste or pursuit that draws them together—her notions of art are crude and she does not even pretend to literary excellence—no—it is simply flattered vanity and credulous amazement at an interior—such as he has never seen before and attention to which he has never been accustomed. The man is worthy of better things—and the woman too—for the end of this, in any case, would be mutual dissatisfaction—yet what is to be done? What can I do! Genie too!”

And the poor little governess clasped her hands and wept—those silent dropping tears, which she had learned to shed during a period of bitter tyranny on one part and suffering on another, when to pour these quiet drops was the one luxury that still remained to her condition, and which no person could deprive her of.

Yet, by the time the evening rays had left the "pleached arbor," and the low crimson sun was dropping to his rest, "pillowing his chin upon the rosy sea," as Milton says of such a sunset, she was quite composed and almost happy again, and she was deeply engaged in the second volume of the Girondists, when she caught the sounds of carriage wheels upon the gravelled road, and heard the clock in the Campanile tower strike eleven. The young voices of Gertrude and Genie were soon overheard in the hall and the low tones of Mr. Rivers; but the cheerful voice of Mrs. Thermor was silent, though she distinctly recognized her steps upon the stairs, on her way to her chamber in the front of the building. The room which Miss Minande occupied was situated in the ell, opening on a connecting platform of the stairway, and the door must be passed by any one going up the remainder of the first flight of steps divided at that point to reach the larger and more richly furnished chambers on the second floor, devoted to more honored guests.

Her room had its compensations, however. Its windows overlooked the parterre at the extremity of which the pavilion was situated; and it was the happy privilege of the occupant to see the flowers and shrubbery below, and to notice the frequent pedestrians in the garden, one of whom had become to her an object of such surpassing interest. Hastily extinguishing her light, she watched him from her casement cross the garden in the broad, silvery radiance of the newly-risen moon—then nearly full—and she marked the unusual elasticity of his step and the gayety of his mien, as he went singing through the shrubbery a love-song from

"Robert le Diable," one with the music of which she was familiar. Had she followed the strong impulse of her soul she would have gone down to join him (when he stopped so long almost beneath her window to gather a handful of lilies of the valley and violets, then in full blow, for whom she readily guessed); gone to meet him and warn him, even if she lost him forever, of the delusion of his sentiments, of the fallacy of his hopes. She was not a very conventional woman, and there were few things she would not have dared for the sake of those she loved, though she was essentially modest in the very framing of her nature; false modesty was a thing she repudiated.

She could have descended that night into that moonlit garden and have expostulated with and laid her hand upon the arm of the man who possessed her entire affection, as purely and with as much holiness of heart as though she had been an angel from on high, deputed to visit an erring and unhappy mortal. She was older now than when Rosolio had shown her the way through the secret door to the bedside of her benefactor—loved since that hour; older and more experienced, both (for bitter sorrows had surged over her since then), than when she laid white flowers upon his pillow and gave him that opal ring in exchange for the little twisted serpents of her enamel treasure, which until lately had never left her finger, but not a whit less fervent, less romantic.

He of course suspected nothing of this claim of hers on his interest, on his honor; might never know it, for with the green domino and the mystery it shadowed forth, had she not relinquished all right to his vowed affection?

But to her he was the same as the noble youth who had

defended her against the chief enemy of her life—who for her sake had received in his breast the steel of the assassin, and had honorably forborne to pursue her with a curiosity and determination that must have cost her dear, even if successful, had they not indeed proved fatal to her respect for and confidence in him.

Had the wealth of the Countess Cluche been hers, instead of poverty and dependence, how freely she would have lavished it upon him; but the time had been, after their separation, when the bread she ate had been steeped in bitterness and when the tyranny of her superiors had crushed her to despair. Even now that her lot was to some degree ameliorated, she was an exile and alien from her home, earning experience in humility and abasement, and bitterly regretting the influences that had driven her to the post she occupied. It was no doubt from a sense of the unintentional wrong inflicted by her powerful hand that she had spoken so bitterly and impulsively one day to Mazon Rivers of the Countess Cluche, an error never repeated, and checked by him in the outset it may be remembered.

She did not like him the less, it must be confessed, for this, even though by such means rebuked, for above all qualities she honored truth, loyalty and justice; but his words had established a final barrier between them on the subject of their patroness which she sought to pass no more. She respected the delicacy with which he forbore to inquire concerning the woman from whose hand he was receiving his bread, unmerited as he conceived it to be, or to comment on her proceedings as reported by another, even though that other were a person in whose veracity he reposed all trust.



During their close communion of late, it may be supposed that his desire to consult with and confide in her, expressed some time before, might have induced Mazon Rivers to lay bare his secret to the dispassionate eyes, as he considered them, of Mademoiselle Marie Minande. Some strange reticence or power of creating such on her part, rather than his own, a power which she unconsciously wielded, for she both desired and dreaded his confidence, had kept him silent, however, with reference to the matter nearest his heart, and to-night he felicitated himself a hundred times that such had been the case.

No one could ever again interpose between him and the woman he adored, for had he not that evening received unequivocal evidences of her confiding affection, and was he not lifted at once and forever from the depths of the ditch of despond to the seventh heaven of felicity?

A month later he recalled his delusion with a mocking smile; but at the time we write of, the evening of the 20th of May—that preceding the day of his execution and death and final resurrection—this belief was the one reality of his delirious life! In order to account for this condition of ecstasy, however, we must “commencer au deluge” and retrace our steps—or rather his—to the moment when Mazon Rivers followed Mrs. Thermor, that bird of Paradise of exquisitely-dressed perfection, into her luxurious coach and took his seat beside her.

It was a bland and delicious evening, clear and warm, with a soft breeze blowing from the bay, and a few white sails scudding across it, while droves of wild geese and wedges of teal duck diversified its surface or flew above it with their rushing wings and clanging trumpet note.

All nature seemed in unison; there was not a discordant note or jangled wire, and the fine harmony of the external world attuned the spirits of those who had gone forth to enjoy it in the comfortable coach of Birk-braes—mother and daughter and guests, with one exception—Genie alone was moody.

They drove on the smooth, hard beach, just out of reach of the lapping waves, for some miles, and then, suddenly turning from the bay, found themselves at once in a green, quiet country road that led them insensibly to the place of their destination. As they stopped before the stone-pillared gateway of Deansford, while Juba, the footman *pro tem.*, leaped down to open its hospitable portal, Genie said almost fretfully, rousing herself from a silence of some minutes' duration, during which Gertrude Lindsay had vainly tried to awake her attention—"Mamma, why didn't you invite Miss Minande to come with us? See, there is ample room for another on this wide seat between Gertrude and myself; and for that matter, I should have been almost willing to have stayed at home to have yielded her that pleasure. I am quite wretched at the idea that she will feel forsaken. Besides, I had not time to tell her that I was coming, Rena hurried me so. Mamma, why did you not let me know sooner, so that I might at least have explained my absence to Miss Minande, or have apologized?" and her blue eyes swam in reproachful tears.

"It was not at all necessary, my love. Miss Minande has no authority where my will is concerned. I am quite willing to assume the whole blame, Genie, if blame there be, and am sorry to see you attach such consequence to trifles."

"Trifles, mamma! to hurt a fellow-creature's feelings is not a trifle, and I never knew before that you thought so." A little asperity here; but her mother replied blandly—

"Nor do I, my love; but there is no question of this at all. Mademoiselle Minande is a person of too much sense and 'savior faire' not to understand the whole proceedings perfectly. You know, Genie, that, whatever my own opinion may be, I can scarcely expect Mrs. Donaldson to wish for the society of my daughter's governess. She was not even included in the invitation, which I fear I did not sufficiently explain to you, Mr. Rivers," turning to that gentleman. "The invitation included all my guests, so that you were asked, remember, on your own merits entirely; though I preferred to compel your service as an escort, lest peradventure you should refuse."

"Had you allowed me to choose my motive for accepting, you could not have selected better, Madame," he rejoined, with a pleased expression and graceful bow, which brought his handsome head in close juxtaposition to Mrs. Thermor's face, so that for a moment it screened them both, while he whispered, "This kindness restores me to life."

Her heightened color was her only response to this grateful recognition of her attention and reparation for past coldness; but Genie, insensible as Gertrude Lindsay to this by-play, went on doggedly in a manner quite unusual with her to ask "hard questions."

"And do you not consider Mademoiselle Minande your guest, mamma, as well as"—hesitating for a moment, then speaking very emphatically—"Mr. Rivers?"

"No, certainly not, Genie; you ought to discriminate better," and Mrs. Thermor frowned at her daughter and fanned herself violently, but in vain.

"Why not, mamma; what difference is there? Neither of them were acquaintances of yours until they came with letters from the Countess Cluche. Then both became equally your guests as far as I can see or understand, and both are foreigners."

"This is a very disagreeable discussion—very, indeed—pray terminate it, Genie. You talk nonsense, and here we are almost at the second gate."

"I do not care. I want to understand this matter. If Mademoiselle Minande is good enough to teach me and be my principal associate, she is equal to Lucy Donaldson and her mother, I should think. No, you need not pinch me, Gertrude Lindsay; it is not your dear friend that is slighted and ill-treated, it is mine; the friend I love best in the whole world—of course I mean after mamma and the boys—better than Colonel Kavanaugh himself, or you even, Gertrude—better than myself; and I do not know any one at present staying at Birk-braes who is fit to hold a candle to her. I don't, mamma, and neither do you, and it breaks my heart to have to slight her so."

Here Genie sobbed, and Monsieur gave tokens of being profoundly moved, while Mrs. Thermor cast down her eyes and bit her lips to control her vexation, which she well knew it was no use to vent in scolding Genie, even had not the presence of others prevented an explosion.

Genie, too long mistress of her own will to bear to be thwarted now, and usually of her own accord most

amiable and considerate, so that her novel mood was really terrifying.

Suddenly she returned to the attack, wiping her eyes and smoothing her hair as she did so.

"Do you not think Mademoiselle a perfect lady, mamma—that you treat her like a seamstress and leave her behind even when she is really invited? Do you not think her quite equal to any one, Monsieur, at Birkbraes?"

"With one exception, Mademoiselle, I do."

"Oh, you are obliged to say that, of course, but you know in your heart that she is more accomplished than all of us put together."

Here Gertrude Lindsay broke in: "Yes, you ought to see her dance the shawl dance. I declare she does it better than Miss La Jonne, our dancing teacher at Madame Le Baume's, an ugly old thing as ever you laid your eyes on."

"But she is a perfect lady; none of your Miss La Jonnes at all!" said Genie, with flashing eyes, turning on Gertrude Lindsay, who suppressed a giggle, for her estimate of governesses had been formed at school and resembled Mrs. Thermor's.

"If she were to tell me that she was the daughter of King Louis Phillippe, or that she was Joan of Arc even, I would believe her; there now," and she brought down her hand with more energy than refinement on her companion's knee.

"Does Mademoiselle Minande teach you to emphasize in that manner?" asked Mrs. Thermor, coolly, having her irate daughter she now well knew at advantage and herself inconceivably annoyed at the turn affairs had

taken. "I am surprised at you, Genie," she continued, "and if you wish to know why Mademoiselle is not my guest, I will tell you frankly—because she is my hireling!"

A slight exclamation escaped Monsieur as this objectionable word slid smoothly from the lips of Mrs. Thermor, explained in the next moment without a syllable from his lips, by the pressure of his hand upon his heart, and the corrugation of his forehead, expressive of sudden pain.

"He did not hear me, what with his stitch in the side and the noise of the gravel-road," thought Mrs. Thermor, for they were now driving up to the door of entrance. "I almost wish he had. I want him to know exactly how I estimate his Miss Minande. He is very cautious indeed, and non-committal all at once; but a month ago she was a little grisette, and a presumptuous 'petite gouvernante,' when she arranged so successfully our attitude in the picture. Well, it must be confessed, she is a good deal smarter than he is, poor dear, gentle, engaging fellow; and I suppose the end of it will be that she will take him in, but who need care? Surely not I, of all persons."

The soliloquy ended just in time for Mrs. Thermor to assume her blandest smile, and bite her lips in order to renew their rosy tint, before the carriage stopped, and Mrs. Donaldson came down the front steps to welcome her guests, and led them directly up to her father and mother, who were seated in arm-chairs, side by side, on the piazza.

She was a sweet, grave-looking woman of thirty-five, whose eldest child (Lucy) was about the age of Genie,

though a head taller. She led a life of deep retirement with her parents and children, whose principal instructor she was. She delighted chiefly in horticulture, and in flowers, of which last she had a great and varied assortment.

Mrs. Thermor had determined to take advantage of the ramble through the grounds and gardens, always proposed to guests at Deansford, as its most attractive features were thus displayed, to explain very gently and frankly to Mr. Rivers—as she could not do at home, without too much formality or the risk of being misunderstood by some observer—the cause of the late estrangement from him, and her satisfaction at finding through his behavior that he had so well understood her motive, her only one, in forsaking his atelier. She intended to cut away all possible silken bonds and grapple him to her interests with hooks of steel instead, to make him her friend, as he could not, must not, be her lover, and to prepare him for a return to the old social unreserve, by crushing all possible hope of aught beyond. After that if he should be mad enough to love her still, it would of course be through no fault of hers, “or,” and she laughed as she mentally concluded the sentence, “or of Miss Minande’s.”

This gracious plan was frustrated, however, by the constant presence of their attentive hostess during the proposed ramble, Genie and Gertrude having gone in another direction with Lucy Donaldson, and Mrs. Thermor found herself seated at the tea table (where strawberries and cream were served in unsurpassable perfection, with all delightful breads, with plump spring chickens and tea and coffee, the last two beverages such

as one rarely gets out of China or France) between old Mr. and Mrs. Dean, who took every pains to satisfy her tastes and occupy her attention.

Glancing down the board she had the satisfaction of seeing that, although Mr. Rivers was keeping up an animated conversation, apparently with the three young girls, all in a prodigious glee, his eyes were for her alone, and even his ears, so far as he could separate them from the Babel of sounds around him. Genie was trying evidently to make amends for her moodiness in the carriage, and her mother was very glad to see her extricating herself so pleasantly from their little misunderstanding, of which she wisely resolved to take no further notice.

After supper there was music among the young people, in which Mr. Rivers, as one of them, took part, and conversation among the old, with whom Mrs. Thermor was necessarily included, and at ten o'clock—the Cinderella hour at Deansford—the Lady of Birk-braes rose to take leave, thankful at heart that the very unsatisfactory evening was at an end. At all events she had dragged her artist away from Miss Minande—that was one satisfaction; and shown that presumptuous piece of perfection very plainly what power she possessed over the object of her late monopoly, and how insecure was her hold on his intentions, not to say affections. These she felt assured were all her own, and she would now return him to her safe and sound to have and to hold, if both were willing; she was very sure she was, and tired of the whole affair.

Such were the thoughts that possessed her during the first two miles of their rapid moonlight drive, until startled from the somewhat bitter train of reflection by the rapid whirring of an owl, which flitted from one tree



to another just above the horses' heads with a wild hoot of defiance to some unseen enemy that seemed a fiend's mockery in the ears of Mrs. Thermor.

The horses swerved and pranced a little at this strange interruption of their musings, for they were steady-going, considerate coursers usually, and no doubt indulged in many a reverie of no un-stable character, but were readily restrained by the hands of the strong and practical Uncle Duff, who thereafter enjoined Juba to profound silence as their best security from further trouble.

Ten minutes later the equipage emerged from the leafy lane, through which its course had been holden, to the broad and level strand floored with moonlight—but at a moment so unpropitious to the peculiar mood of “Adams” and “Jackson”—the two steady-going steeds strangely perturbed by their late rencounter—that they were at once stricken with a panic which sent them off at a tangent.

A small and very noisy steamboat, boasting a calliope (one of the first ever adopted by a craft of this description), was rounding to the landing as the horses approached it, emitting sparks and puffs and screams of unearthly melody, enough to have dismayed Bucephalus himself.

As I have said, the horses were off in an instant, dragging after them the ponderous coach at a fearful rate of rapidity—but fortunately on a perfectly level and unobstructed road—still partially controlled by a hand that knew no fear and was well skilled to guide, however it might fail in strength. Juba too lent the aid of his powerful arm to Uncle Duff's tight hold on the bridles

and jerked the bits once more into their proper lodging-places, and out of the teeth of the refractory animals, who seemed possessed by an ill fiend; but before this result was brought about, Mrs. Thermor had made vain efforts to open the carriage-door, with a view of springing out, and had only been prevented from doing so rash a thing by the strong, determined grasp of Mr. Rivers. Gertrude and Genie sat manfully in their places, the first hiding her face, but the latter perfectly unmoved—though terribly frightened, not only at her situation, but the shrieks of her mother—which rang out wild and shrill upon the night, and carried dismay to the soul of Mr. Rivers.

When Uncle Duff had succeeded in stopping the frightened horses, Juba dismounted from the box and came to the carriage-door to find that his mistress had fainted—so that after consultation and her partial revival it was thought best to proceed as cautiously as possible to Birk-braes.

For Mrs. Thermor to walk the rest of the way was out of the question, and the young ladies, of course, must remain with her as well as Mr. Rivers, who felt quite confident again of the pacific dispositions of "Adams" and "Jackson" when Uncle Duff offered to go their security "for a hundred dollars that dey would never cut up such a caper agin to der dyin' day. It was all along of dat owl," he continued, "some bad ole man's sperret, no doubt, 'case dem beasts hab seen too much of steam-boats to min' de snort of dat little bussy waterfowl, wat dey has brought off passengers from more times dan dey has had new shoes on, an' dat ain't seldom, I tells you quality all, for dey's 'stravagant beasts on shoes."

So Uncle Duff remounted his box and again charged Juba to the intensest silence, and carefully pursued the road home, which the moon made as plain as day could have done, casting back encouraging reassurances as to the perfectly placable disposition of "Jack" and "Ad" from time to time through the front window of the coach, to the great relief of Gertrude and Genie.

Mrs. Thermor noticed nothing that was said or done, giving at times a little gasping sigh as she continued to recline on the shoulders of Mr. Rivers, who tenderly and respectfully supported her by placing one arm around her waist, while with his disengaged hand he held one of hers, Eugenie chafing the other from time to time. Very gradually she revived, to feel his hot breath upon her cheek, to hear his murmurs of love and passionate devotion breathed so close to her ear that they were inaudible to any other. Then with an impulse she could not forbear at the moment, she turned her face up to his, and their lips met in one long, clinging kiss—fortunately in the shadow of the closed-up and curtained back seat unseen by any eye.

Fully aroused by this indiscretion to a sense of what she owed herself, Mrs. Thermor raised her head and withdrew from the embrace of the magnetic man beside her, and from that moment supported her brow and steadied her brain, still whirling with alarm—not more than passion and regret, perhaps—on the other side of the carriage.

A few minutes more brought them safely to the gate of Birk-braes, and very soon the heavy family coach was drawn up in its usual orderly manner before the veranda and the door of the family mansion.

Mrs. Thermor insisted on going up with Rena to her bed-room, otherwise unsupported, and in due order Gertrude and Genie followed. Mr. Rivers, whose tent we know was pitched in the garden, went in another direction to seek his couch—and it has been seen with what elation of step and mien he passed beneath the window of one quick and accurate in his case to interpret every symptom of sorrow or gladness. But, above all else, the gathering of those flowers by night had convinced Miss Minande that he esteemed himself a favored lover.

It is difficult to determine, from what we know of human nature (by which I mean, of course, you and I, kind reader), which of the chief actors in this little drama of ours passed the most sleepless night—the lady already disgusted with the want of self-knowledge and self-control she had displayed that evening, and preparing for a reaction that should involve the happiness of more than one—or the young man, carried away by delusive and enthusiastic visions of approaching felicity—or the devoted girl who had staked all hope on one desperate venture, and saw it ebbing from her, to leave her life remedilessly bleak and desolate.

Mademoiselle Minande, whether she had slept ill or well, arose with the lark and applied herself to a certain ancient book in which she often found consolation, when all other resources failed her; but Mr. Rivers was late at breakfast, and his eyes were languid and listless as they roved vainly in quest of the lady of his love, absent this morning from her usual post on the plea of a severe headache. Gertrude and Genie recounted, in a very graphic manner, the last night's episode of the runaway horses, and bore testimony to the firmness of Mr. Rivers.

"Mamma would certainly have jumped out of the carriage if he had not held her, and I was afraid she would be angry with him, but she wasn't," added innocent Genie, "she was so very much alarmed."

"Isn't your shoulder a little tired this morning, Mr. Rivers?" questioned shrewd Gertrude Lindsay, with a somewhat suspicious naïvete. "Mrs. Thermor, you know, is no slight weight."

"Not at all," was the embarrassed answer, as, looking up, the respondent met the distended eyes of Miss Minande with an expression that haunted him all day, though the gaze itself was instantly averted; yet he continued, firmly: "The only weight that I feel is on my spirits, for, missing Mrs. Thermor, I fear that she is ill from the consequence of the shock—a mere headache seldom banishes her from the breakfast table," adding, as he turned to Miss Minande, a timid and deprecating glance, "Is not such regularity 'en menage' inimitable, Mademoiselle?"

"C'est un des premiers lois de l'univers, vous savez," she answered gravely. "Que ferions nous si le soleil se levait tard a cause de migraine?" and she smiled her pungent smile.

"She is as bitter as quinine sometimes," he thought, "and, it must be added, as bracing, but give me rather conserve of roses for a constancy!"

Although placed so near to one another at table as to be able to converse unheard by the scattering company, they interchanged no more remarks on that memorable morning. Mademoiselle rose as soon as she had finished her brief breakfast, and summoning Eugenie and Gertrude (who, for the time being, had requested leave to

join her classes), crossed the garden in the direction of the pavilion; but Mr. Rivers loitered, contrary to his wont, about the house. In the absence of that gentleman he took possession of Colonel Kavanaugh's great elbow-chair, on the gallery, and surrounded himself with the fumes of his meerschaum and piles of newspapers, each opened in turn to be thrown hastily aside. At last he arrested Rena on her way up-stairs with a waiter of dainty dishes for the breakfast of her mistress, and learned to his dismay in all probability that Mrs. Thermor would not emerge until evening from her retirement, and that she was so nervous she would not even see Miss Genie or have the shutters opened.

After hearing this distressing intelligence, which at the same time flattered his vanity no little and raised a tumult of mingled hopes and fears to wage conflict in his bosom, Mr. Rivers strolled down to the beach to take his noon-day bath, which always brought back the fine equipoise of his system as nothing else could, not even blue pill, valerian, quinine, or what he figuratively called his "conserve of roses."

Lunch was ready in the dining-room when he returned, and he partook of it with a zest unusual to him at that meal, which, to his Bohemian habits, was something of a superfluity. He was glad, he scarcely knew why, to find that Mademoiselle Minande was absent, and that Miss Constance Lindsay and the two little girls, Gertrude and Genie, were his only companions; glad to get a bottle of Chambertin all to himself, for the task before him was one that required more than his usual amount of courage. He availed himself on this occasion of the fine Bath-pressed paper, sealing wax, and patent

ink and pens, of which Rena had begged him on the part of her mistress to use freely whenever he pleased to write either letters or notes, always to be found for the use of guests on a certain small escritoire in the library. Retreating to his fortress, where he knew he should enjoy undoubted security for the remainder of the day, and ensconcing himself firmly therein by placing his table across the door (he never thought of locking), he prepared to write a few opportune lines to the Dulcinea of his affections.

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## CHAPTER VI.

My joy—my best beloved—my only wish.  
How can I speak the transport of my soul?—ADDISON.

Uncertainty!  
Fell demon of our fears—the human soul  
That can support despair, supports not thee!—MALLET.

AFTER inditing pages of passionate appeal and protestation, and blotting them with his tears, our artist—ours “par excellence” just now—concluded his seance of two hours by tearing up all he had written, and contented himself with hastily dashing off the following brief and unpoetical note, which he sent by Rena soon after its conclusion. It was dated—

“THE PAVILION, *May* —.

“Will Mrs. Thermor so far relieve the apprehensions of Mazon Rivers as to send him one line of reassurance as to her condition, written by her own hand? and will that gracious lady be so good, at the same time, as to

inform him when she will be able to grant him a few moments of her *sole* society in the library of Birk-braes? A prompt answer will greatly oblige the writer of these lines, and do much towards assuaging his inexpressible anxiety."

This suggestive missive was sealed with the before-mentioned ring of his uncle—so long concealed near his heart, and bearing the engraven crest of his family—a heron among slender river reeds, holding a writhing serpent in its bill—a significant reference, no doubt, to some early conflict with a wily foeman, in which the Rivers arms and family were triumphant *pro tem*.

After a few moments, that seemed to lengthen to hours in the imagination of the impatient artist, Rena returned, twisting in her fingers a little rose-colored, three-cornered note, scented as before with attar of roses, and directed in the same fine, fluent Italian hand that he had come to deem so characteristic of the peerless Isabella Thermor. It was the very type of a "billet doux"—certainly as far as mere externals went—though the contents were practical enough in all but the eyes of an infatuated lover, for any purpose. It was dated—

"THE BLUE CHAMBER, BIRK-BRAES, *four o'clock*.

"Mrs. Thermor begs to thank Mr. Rivers for the kind expressions of his solicitude, and to assure him of her improved condition and perfect return to her ordinary frame of mind. She will no doubt be sufficiently recovered to receive him 'en tête-à-tête' to-morrow during school hours, when the library is usually vacant, and intrusion improbable, when she hopes that a perfect under-



standing may take place between them. Mrs. Thermor sincerely hopes that Mr. Rivers has neither suffered from anxiety on her account nor from the shock of the alarm, which his firmness prevented from becoming an accident of a very serious nature to his companions. [Some words erased here.] A spring from a carriage under full headway would doubtless have been fatal to the rash friend, who can never forget his opportune interference."

A hundred times after Rena had departed with a message of thanks and congratulation to her mistress, did the elated man press to his lips, his brow, his heart, the little cocked-hat note of comfort and of roseate hue and odor. A hundred times did he trace the graceful, even lines, and each time derive comfort from their perusal.

"She loves me!" he exclaimed in a sort of delirium of delight. "She loves me! Now, welcome danger, poverty; nay, death itself, since I have known this. Last night! Can I ever forget its joy—its ecstasy? Had the horses dashed to pieces at that moment, we should still have been blessed just as we reclined in the shadow, yielding to the soft spirit of delight and eternal union, must, under the circumstances, have sanctified our earthly affection. Yes, death itself would have been delectable."

The dinner bell rang before he had subdued his ecstasy sufficiently to change his blouse for his only coat, or refresh his hands and face, and smooth his dishevelled hair. He did these things hastily; stuffing last of all his precious *billet doux* in his bosom, next to his sacred seal ring, and to the rose-colored flannel undershirt, his sole coxcombery of attire.

"It matters not how I look to-day," he thought, "since she will not be there to see me—that curl is so refractory though that it gives me the appearance of a feathered Mercury, and my hair is, I believe, my weakness," and he brushed it vigorously.

He was not a very strong man, as we have seen: rather pleasant than agreeable, rather good-looking than handsome. If there had been anything very positive about him, Mademoiselle Minande herself, so brave and enduring and decided, would never have fallen in love with him, as unfortunately she had done. These two young people were counterparts, and if the theory of Miss Sheppard was correct (as set forth in her airy novel of that name), were essentially fitted for one another.

On the contrary, Mrs. Thermor adored strength, and it was the gentle exercise of it on the occasion of the runaway horses that had so far conquered her on the preceding evening, as to bring her to nestle in his arms, whom before she had resolved to reject. A weakness of which, being versatile and pliable, she was, of course, by this time very much ashamed. This change of feeling he did not know—could not suspect—for her note seemed to him to confirm as far as it dared all she had permitted and responded to him in the silence of the carriage, when seated by her side. Heaven itself seemed opening to his view. There are many kinds of drunkenness, but of all others for sustaining power of self-delusion, commend me to that of the infatuated lover! There is no species of arrogance or folly or heedlessness of the feelings of others that it does not engender, and no absurdity of conduct that it does not superinduce and encourage. The very step of a man under such dominion changes its character,

and becomes airy and conceited and fantastic, and the voice is often altered as if by the influence of wine, so that it is no wonder his inamorata is so frequently disgusted by the proofs of her adorer's unfitness to bear prosperity, and revokes the dangerous boon that upset his reason, upon mature consideration.

It was in some such mood that Mazon Rivers entered the dining-room at Birkbraes on that day when for a moment in the sudden shadow he failed to descry the presence of his divinity at the head of her own table.

The reason of this unexpected effort of her graciousness, however, became very apparent, as even he could not fail to understand (assume to himself its honor, as he tried at first secretly to do), when he perceived a stranger at her right hand, and Colonel Kavanaugh at his usual post, quietly taking his soup at the foot of the table. Mr. Rivers sunk into his accustomed chair near Miss Minande, and bowed low and reverentially to Mrs. Thermor as soon as he caught her eye; then turning to Miss Minande as he toyed with his vermicelli and burnished spoon, said to her carelessly, "I have not seen you in the pleached bower to-day; where have you kept yourself, fair Beatrice? and how comes on the romance? Have you finished it?"

"Do you mean that of Notre Dame?" she asked significantly, smiling her strange, sweet, bitter smile as she glanced at Mrs. Thermor, "if so, I will tell you it is nearly finished; I am deep in the second volume."

"Yes; I do mean that," he responded with asperity, for he was as quick as lightning to catch a look or a reference, and he bent above his plate for a moment silently; then suddenly raising his head, or jerking it up

rather, he asked sharply, as he looked her in the face, "Come, you who are clairvoyante and such a prophet, tell me how you predestine the conclusion of that last volume, which, after all, you know, rests with the author."

"I think the book will end sadly," she replied; "but I would as soon listen at a door as arrive before his given time at an author's necessitated finale, so I turn no leaves to discover it. After all, if he is a true artist, the end cannot be compelled even by his own volition against what truth is in him, but must be consistent, faithful to nature, and consequently, in respect to the condition of things, like a sum accurately added up. From this conviction I predict a disappointment to him who expects a fortunate conclusion in the romance of 'Notre Dame.'"

And her purple eyes were fixed upon him as if they seemed two spears of light, that entered into and transfixed his brain. "No woman ever had the art of taking the conceit out of a man as you have, Mademoiselle," he murmured low; continuing, as before, to speak in French, as he added with a sudden nod of his head and a resumption of his masculine superiority—soup and roll—"mais enfin nous verrons." To his surprise she answered him in pure and emphatic English, with scarcely a trace of accent in the quotation from a poem which she had made a study:

"Then cast away the worser part of you,  
And live the purer with the better half."

"I felicitate you on the success of your recent readings, Mademoiselle Minande, and the appositiveness of their application as well," he said bitterly. "When did

you take to Shakespeare—to Hamlet above all?—usually a sealed book to foreigners.”

“Some years ago. I like to study mania; it is a whim of mine, that is all. Hamlet, you know, was the prince of maniacs, if one at all. ‘*Pour cela je m’en doute.*’ He, it is acknowledged by many critics, I believe, assumed it for a purpose; but how thoroughly he understood its phases! He even turned or seemed to turn against Ophelia, you remember, in order to convince those about him of his insanity—the woman he had loved—still loved so well.”

“He never loved her truly or he could not have forgotten her, even in his bitter grief or lunacy, nor could he have grieved so deeply at his mother’s dereliction as he did had he loved *her*.”

“A novel criticism—a novel creed! The keepers of lunatic asylums can one and all sustain the truth of Shakespeare on this subject. A mere delusion, however—unworthy the name of love—could bear no part in such experience of hate.”

“I understand your theory—feathers float off on the tide—jewels sink to the bottom of the stream, to be thrown up again by the first earthquake or volcano that convulses the system.”

“I like your simile, and in turn understand you. We shall come back by-and-by to a very good understanding. I do not doubt, Monsieur”—and she laughed silently in his face—“but Colonel Kavanaugh addresses you,” and her gravity returned.

“If you can spare one moment from your interesting neighbor, I will thank you, Mr. Rivers, to pass me the decanter of Madeira, first filling your own glass and hers,

for we are about to drink a toast, I believe, with us a very solemn proceeding;" and he gave in sonorous tones:

"THE HEALTH OF MAJOR RAVENSHAW,"

which was drunk enthusiastically, of course, by the whole company, after which the merry cry of "a speech, a speech," from the lips of their hostess, brought the gentleman so pledged to his feet—in his six feet one inch of stately and graceful manhood and self-possessed embarrassment, so to speak—for he was both easy in manner and at fault for a few moments, as far as words went. He began at last:

"Ladies and gentlemen, if you had lived as long as I have done, where speech alone, without the prefix of the indefinite article, was considered a gift of supererogation, and where men having exhausted each other's ideas, were obliged to read aloud to themselves or to senseless trees or stones, in order to keep from forgetting the sounds of their native tongue, you would scarcely marvel at my hesitation in addressing you, even in grateful return for your best of all good wishes. The Seminoles are not accomplished as conversationalists, and the Everglades form a poor theatre for an orator, as well as an indifferent school for manners, nor was I enabled to find among them, after patient and diligent search, I regret to acknowledge, the enchanted waters of eternal youth, of which the early Spanish visitors taught the legend. Indeed, in pursuit of this delusive fountain I lost what youth and health I had carried thither, and therefore is your pledge doubly delightful to me, confident as I am in its sincerity and the power of good wishes from the pure and perfect. I will give you in return, 'Our native land—

may it never be less, which simply means an eternal union and an eternal progress for America," and bowing reseated himself amidst the applause of the guests of Birk-braes, to fill the list of which Mr., Mrs. and Miss Lindsay had that day returned.

The Major's toast was drunk with renewed enthusiasm, after which, during the flow of much lively conversation, especially directed to the cynosure of all eyes, the guest "*par excellence*," as it seemed that day, of Birk-braes, for as such its mistress evidently distinguished Major Ravenshaw, Mr. Rivers ventured to ask of his next neighbor in courteous tones, "*Que donc est cette nomme La!*" bending low to make the inquiry.

"*Le fiance de Madame pentetre*," she said mischievously, without dreaming of the truth of her remark, for such the reader remembers he once had been.

"*Bah, impossible! Regardez donc ces cheveux; par-cemes de neig! Cet homme galant a cinquante ans s'il a douze!*"

"*It est bien beau cependant avec ses cinquante ans!*" she said, smiling, "*et son age le rend tout a fait convenable, Madame; qui n'est plus dans sa premiere jeunesse tu sais!*" and she helped herself to a *viz de veaer* before her; "*en vent tu*," she demanded of her neighbor.

She is very familiar, thought Mr. Rivers, and suddenly, too. Now what have I done that she should *tu-tover* me in this fashion? But he only said, "*Je le trouve bien laid moi!*" for at that moment he saw, or thought he saw, a tender passage of eyes between his hostess and her martial guest—a devoted look on his part and a soft, bewildering expression on hers—which he so well remembered to have encountered in the first

days of their acquaintance, or might it not be termed courtship?

She had not looked at him in that way for some time, and he was fired with fierce jealousy, which he could not conceal from his companion. Silent, moody, observant from that moment, he ceased to eat or drink; and excusing himself abruptly, on the plea of indisposition, he rose with the appearance of the ices and fruits, and wandered forth in the grounds.

He was lying under a great catalpa tree in full and glorious blossom, when he heard voices approaching, and in a few moments more saw Mrs. Thermor advancing leaning on the arm of the stately Major Ravenshaw. "But that time is past, Ernest," he heard her say, "and you must never refer to it again; and as to your card, I never heard of it. Of course I believed what they told me. How could I know? Why here is Mr. Rivers, I declare, lying in ambush. I do believe on purpose to spring out upon us, like one of your Seminole braves. Mr. Rivers, come join us, the evening air is so delightful. We are on our way to the beach."

"Excuse me this evening, Mrs. Thermor," rising and bowing slightly as he spoke. His hat was on the grass beneath the tree, and the declining sun shone over and made radiant his golden brown hair, with his careless silken curls. He looked like the idle dreamer he was, and young enough in that rich crimson light to have passed for the son of that very handsome couple that had passed before him—that is, if they had happened to have married, as do too many of our citizens—hardly out of the pale of college, boyhood and school-girlhoodism. "Excuse me, Mrs. Thermor, until to-morrow," and he



looked at her with grave significance. "We shall meet then once for all," he murmured.

"Then good-evening, Mr. Rivers, and may your reveries be pleasant;" and she passed on, having entirely forgotten, in the embarrassment of the moment, to introduce the gentlemen—still unacquainted.

"Who is that tragic youth," asked Major Ravenshaw, after they had gone a few steps, "who dares to make appointments for the 'all hail to-morrow' with one of earth's sweetest witches?"

"It was a great oversight in me, but I really forgot to make you acquainted with each other. He will think nothing of it, however, for he is so French; but you!"

"Nor I, because I am so Indian," he interrupted, laughing; "but you have not answered my question—who and what is the melo-dramatic youth?" and he looked at her sharply.

"Simply an artist painting my picture for the gallery of my cousin, the Countess Cluche!" And then came the whole story with details that I will spare my already instructed reader.

"The Countess Cluche! or rather the daughter of the count of that name. I remember to have seen her in Paris ten years ago, at court with her father, after—after my marriage (since my wife's death, you know, I returned to Florida—always a refuge in despair for me). She was a very beautiful woman, as I remember her, this kinswoman of yours, as it seems she turns out to be—tall and dark, but clear of complexion and of eye. There was an abominable man, I recollect, said to be engaged to her, who followed her everywhere, and the report was that she detested him, but was compelled to

receive his attentions. Soon afterwards she died, somebody said, and I saw a long obituary notice of her in *Galignani*, said to have been written by some American."

"You are precipitate, Major Ravenshaw," she said. "No, you have it all wrong. It was the younger sister, a very plain person, who died in the convent; and after that the man you allude to died also—a Count Delmar, I think—and she (my cousin Eugenie I mean) devoted herself to her father, who was perfectly detestable and exacting, and some said mad, and very cruel to her as long as he lived (Mr. Rivers had heard) and now she enjoys his estate, but is hopelessly bent on celibacy, and very 'devote,' as the French call it. She will probably be here in September; in the meantime she has written to me and sent me her miniature, an old-fashioned affair which you shall see."

"So it is a mere interchange of feminine pictures—and the sentimental youth is the medium! Really, Isabella, I thought he looked at you quite daringly as he rose from the grass. I felt like inflicting my cane upon his handsome head—but I suppose it was only an artistic stare—and now let us resume the thread of our discourse. I want you to understand about that visit. I gave the card to Mr. Thermor himself; he must have forgotten to hand it or even mention it to you, but was it not strange?"

A tide of crimson flooded her face and neck. "He probably wished to spare me useless pain," she murmured, "for he knew about the past, Ernest. He always was the kindest, most considerate of men; never jealous at all."

"But it was not just, Isabella, either to you or to me,"

said Major Ravenshaw, earnestly, almost passionately. "What must you not have thought after meeting me, too, of my neglectful levity; you, the woman to whom my whole youth had been consecrated; for it was ten years after your marriage before I ever again looked upon the face of society, in the corroding grief consequent upon my bitter disappointment. I ought not to have been made to seem to have slighted you, even by your own husband. God knows! he could have afforded to be generous, for he had my heart's best treasure in his keeping. It was I that was beggared, not he."

"But you were married at that very time, Major Ravenshaw, and to a woman you loved."

"Yes; but it was a mortification and a bitterness to me that you never noticed my call even by a visit to my wife. You, the lady of my early choice—and she knew that it was so, for I told her every thought of my heart. I had no concealments from her, and she earnestly desired to see and know you for my sake. She was superior to ill-founded jealousy, and, in her separate world, ignorant of its meaning, indeed; and she knew she was first in my affections as a mere matter of right; but I had told her my story before our marriage."

"Then you were truly fond of one another?" she asked.

"We should have been hypocrites and dastards in the sight of God had we not been. But time, that had plucked out the sting of my early disappointment, has also mellowed the sorrow of my bereavement. She left me childless and alone, and ten years more in the everglades of Florida were required to allay the pang of our parting. Now fresh as a boy, though at forty-seven

years, I am about to woo another wife, and win her if I can. None other than yourself, Isabella, if heaven favor me in this new phase of feeling."

She replied with stateliness: "Remember you are now to me as a stranger. It would require time, reflection, consultation with friends, an accurate study of you and of my own heart."

"How long do you demand for all this?" he asked, suddenly stopping in their path, and confronting her a little sternly; "weeks—months—how many, Isabella?"

"Years, perhaps, Ernest."

"Years! We have them not to waste. Fair as you are your youth is fleeting fast, and mine is gone, as these whitening hairs proclaim," and he touched his lofty crest with his brown and sinewy hand, while his dark eyes flashed fire and his lips quivered with emotion.

"When the string is loosed the bow flies back to its old position, and so without an effort of my being, by the mere unstringing of my bow of life—through the death of her I loved—I am just where my youth left me—yours and yours alone; no other woman has ever received even my passing homage, save the mute wife I lost, and circumstances controlled me there. She was the daughter of our Florida commander, who was killed in the swamps by Indians—the man to whose post I succeeded immediately—and this very fact made me feel that I ought to replace his loss to his child. The girl was motherless and fatherless, and poor to indigence, as I then believed, though beautiful and gentle as an angel; and the seal of silence was set forever on her ear and lip by the fiat of her Creator. I pitied, loved, won, and married her, but consumption had set its fangs on her

young life, and she perished from my side. This was years ago, Isabella, as I have said, and you were a married woman, whom to seek with lover's vows were to dishonor. You were lost to me, as I then thought, forever. But the other day, when your brave boy told me, at West Point, that you were at last a widow, I lost no time in coming to your house, with but one ambition. You are rich, they say, Isabella; but my revenue from one silver mine exceeds yours twofold, and this is but one source of wealth to me—one tithe of my possessions. I do not say this to influence you, for I know of old your noble soul; but I do wish that you should understand how little I am governed in seeking your hand by a desire to possess your fortune. Give it to whom you will—leave all—but come with me!" and he seized her hand.

"Whither would you take me, Major Ravenshaw?" she said, gently withdrawing her fingers from his grasp.

"Wherever it pleases you best to go; to the cities of Europe or those of our own country. Your pretty country-seat will serve as a resource; but life is passing, and we have both lived too long in seclusion. Let us see the world."

"I will consult with Colonel Kavanaugh," she said, faintly. "I will give you an answer in a fortnight. I am then to have a masked party for my niece (or rather, Mr. Thermor's), Rose Blamire—an Oriental affair, from 'Lalla Rookh' chiefly, but Byron's heroes and heroines are to have a place. Come as Conrad; you will look so handsome in that dress, and I will be"—she hesitated.

"Medora, not Gulnare," and he shuddered at the name last spoken. "It is a good omen. I shall surely

come, attired as you desire, but in return remember what character I have assigned to you."

"But I have no intention of masking at all."

"I like that best of all; then I, too, will be a 'looker on' in your little 'Vienna.' The truth is, Isabella, lovely matrons like yourself and grave and reverend signors like me should stand on their dignity. Let the young assume disguises. There is your little artist who would make a good troubadour—but I forget; this is an Oriental masque."

"I have already appointed him as troubadour to Lalla Rookh. You remember the poet, Prince Feramorz—he was an Oriental minstrel."

"Yes, I remember. And who is to be Azim in the Veiled Prophet of Khorasan? Who Selim in the Light of the Harem? Who Hafez in the Fire Worshipers? the finest, I believe, of all those poems. Do you remember those lines, Isabella?" And he recited in fervent and well-modulated tones, gazing upon her face as he did so, the following passage:

"Oft in our fairy wanderings,  
I've wished that little isle had wings,  
And we within its fairy bowers,  
Were wafted off to seas unknown,  
Where not a pulse should beat but ours,  
And we might live, love, die alone,  
Far from the cruel and the cold,  
Where the bright eyes of angels only  
Should come around us to behold  
A paradise so pure and lonely."

"Would this be world enough for thee?" she asked, completely ignoring his quotation. "You seem to have all the characters at your fingers' ends; you must have heard of our festival and hunted them up for the occasion."

"Not so; I never heard a syllable about it; how should I? But in that solitude of mine I learned to make friends of books, and poets above all other writers. They condense matters—concentrate, embalm them—make them compact and portable. It is easy to remember oracles and aphorisms in verse; they seize upon the ear as well as fancy, and make a perpetual music in the mind."

"I have not improved my life as you have done, Ernest; I know very little of these poems you adore."

"Why need you know of them?" he asked. "Are you not one of them—a poem in your own person—perfect, outspoken, splendid? I would not love you as I do were you not the same sweet, artless being—the charmer of my youth, I would not love you other than you are—my love, my queen, my peerless Isabella;" and he audaciously kissed her hand.

"By Jove! here comes our little Bohemian again. I do believe he is pursuing us. Let me at him," and he laid his hand on his sword-cane menacingly, yet laughed at the same time, so that the action seemed simply contemptuous—not belligerent at all—and as such Mazon Rivers felt it, scarce knowing why he did so, for he had not heard the accompanying words, nor witnessed the act of gallantry that preceded them.

With a slight salutation he passed on in the direction of the garden—yet even in the gathering twilight he had noticed, with the quickness native to him, and which belongs by right to lovers—the downcast eyelid of Mrs. Thermor, and her uncertain gait, so different from her usual mien of pride and grace.

"There is something mysterious about all this," he murmured as he went, "and perhaps Mademoiselle is

right in her conjecture—yet no—it cannot be! She is too pure, too true for that. Was it not last night that we interchanged tacit vows, such as women value and consider far more binding than myriads of words? Is not her kiss still warm upon my lips? and the clasp of that soft hand, is it not still thrilling my own? She loves me—me only—and this man is only a clamorous creditor, or an old friend of Mr. Thermor's, whose sacred claims she must acknowledge before her daughter—and Colonel Kavanaugh. He said something, I remember, about going away very soon—this doughty knight of hers—and she is no doubt compelled to these attentions by her noble estimate of hospitality. But to-morrow all will be explained.” And the anticipation of that sweet promised interview in the “library during school hours”—an allusion in her note he could not doubt that pointed to the quiet vigilance and almost ubiquitous presence of Mademoiselle—and which was calculated to reassure him as to the desire for privacy that he had expressed to sustain his spirit and give buoyancy to his step.

In the garden he saw Mademoiselle Minande flitting like a night moth among the flowers—but she did not come to meet him, nor did he pursue her retreating steps. It seemed a mutual avoidance, though on very different principles. The drawing-room was filled with company that evening—some neighbors had driven over to Birkbraes after sunset, to return by moonlight, and Mrs. Thermor was more than usually beautiful in a rose-colored silk of richest fabric, relieved by fine laces and with a crown of natural flowers in her hair. Miss Lindsay was also richly dressed, and the room was redolent with flow-



ers and lovely ladies, and bright with wax lights and lamps ; waiters coming and going with ices and wines in crystal or silver salvers ; music, conversation, and all the externes of refined society.

Miss Minande sat in one corner with her eternal crochet-work, enjoying the scene very much, yet apparently self-absorbed and unconscious. She wore a dress of sheer linen lawn, delicate and white as drifted snow, trimmed with valenciennes lace, and closed at the throat and wrists in the simplest fashion. An apron of deep blue silk with a pointed stomacher, which defined her exquisite waist and bust very perfectly, yet modestly, was the badge of her order that marred the otherwise aristocratic texture and trimming of her simple costume. Her perfect hands were gloveless, her small feet encased in black satin slippers, from the Rue Castiglione, that paradise of shoemakers ; and the handkerchief that peeped from her apron-pocket was a marvel of fineness and simplicity, united in one matchless web. She had ventured to place a bunch of lilies of the valley in her bosom, and a half-blown moss-rose in her twisted hair, confined by a string of wax-beads, no doubt, though very like pearls, that contrasted favorably with its jetty hue.

“Who is that pretty, delicate looking creature ?” asked Major Ravenshaw of his hostess as they stood together in the embrasure of a window—she toying with her fan and totally occupied with herself—and he gazing about him freely in the intervals of their conversation.

“A Mademoiselle Minande, the governess my cousin, the Countess Cluche, you know, sent me for Eugenie. She is very accomplished.”

“Ah, a governess as well as an artist—and so refined both in appearance. You are indeed fortunate.”

"A very simple little person this, however, as far as manner goes; she has no idea of society at all, and cannot teach 'aplomb' at all, so necessary to a belle. She is always the same."

"So few can afford to be strictly natural," he rejoined, "that I have come to look upon it as a test of good-breeding to dare to be one's self. I noticed her at table to-day, she eats well and seems to be high-bred."

"She is scarcely that, but knows very well how to handle her knife and fork, of course, having lived at Les Hirondelles.' My cousin is, I am told, a polished lady, and the Count, her father, I have heard my father say, was the most fastidious of men."

"Selfish people are usually fastidious," he answered vaguely, still bending his eyes on the little governess; "but she is lady-like, which I take it means something better and very different."

"Oh, very; there can be no doubt about that; a little too pragmatism, however, to be considered elegant at all."

"There goes your Bohemian, I see, straight to her corner; what a suitable pair they seem! He really is a very good-looking fellow, and has good manners; he knows how to bow 'par exemple;'" and the Major laughed merrily.

"Yes, he bows gracefully and talks agreeably, too; but I do not think he has the slightest fancy for Mademoiselle Minande; that is, as far as I can judge—not the slightest."

She spoke so eagerly that he felt amazed, and hastened to say: "Nor she for him, I should suppose, from the cool unconcern of her reception. I suppose the principal bond of union between them is the French tongue,

which I observed they spoke exclusively at table. One can see from the motion of her lips that it is not English they are framing, even at this distance."

"What a detective you would make, to be sure," she said, smiling; "are you in the habit of observing so closely?" and it was not without a sinking of the heart that she asked the question, for the mastery of this man was already upon her. Yet resolve as she would, it was inexpressibly bitter to Mrs. Thermor to be obliged to stand under the sovereign spell of Major Ravenshaw, and witness that distant, unrestrained intercourse—that thinly veiled flirtation.

Miss Lindsay approached them at this moment, with a report of what was transpiring in the gay and busy throng of which they made no part, standing as they did on the elevated platform of the broad bay window, stately and solitary, not through choice so much on the part of the lady as a want of power to refuse the request of the gentleman.

"Mr. Cannon says you look like a king and queen giving audience," whispered the gay girl to Mrs. Thermor, quite loud enough for both to hear; "and that we never saw such a well-matched couple. Then Aunt Constance replied that it was quite an old affair, and sighed as she said in her sentimental way, you know, Mrs. Thermor: 'But broken links may still be clasped again.'"

"I suppose she lives in such hopes," said Mrs. Thermor, a little tartly for her, for the story of Miss Lindsay's most unfortunate engagement and its rupture was no secret to her friends. "As far as I am concerned, however, Clara, rest assured there are no broken links to clasp. Major Ravenshaw is a widower, which word in-

cludes every obstacle in my estimation, and besides that you must acknowledge, my dear—for candor is your forte—he is rather too old for me, at least looks so.”

She had bent low to whisper the last half ironical words behind her fan, though with a heightened color that indicated emotion of some sort to the quick eye of her companion, who said nervously, “What conspiracy is this, fair ladies, you are entering into against my peace? Come, I insist on a revelation.”

“Then Mrs. Thermor must make it,” said Miss Lindsay, turning off. “Oh! there very opportunely comes Mr. Rivers. I will go now and walk up and down the umbra with him for a few minutes and leave you to your explanation. I do so want a snuff of the mild May air. Do you smell the crab-apples, Mr. Rivers?” as she advanced to intercept him. “Are they not delicious? Come, take a turn on the porch, ‘au clair de la lune,’ as your French song says. One can take these liberties, you know, with you—an engaged man”—she said, laughing, and looking back as she went at Mrs. Thermor, whose very lips turned pale as she clenched her fan.

It was a Parthian dart that rankled, and when she spoke again her voice was changed and trembled in spite of herself; nor did she long continue in the embrasure.

It was agreed that night between Major Ravenshaw and herself that nothing more should be said between them or to others, with one exception, on the subject of their courtship until he should return to take part in, or be a spectator, as he pleased, of the “Feast of Roses.” She promised then to give him a decided answer, which, he doubted not for a moment, would be favorable, because of the proposed delay; for in his straightforward way he

thought: "Why not else refuse me instantly? It is a part of her idea of dignity, and I like it," he continued to himself as they left the embrasure, arm in arm, to solicit music from Mademoiselle Minande, whose gifts of course belonged to her employer for the time being, and reflected honor on her taste and discrimination; "besides," he continued, musingly, "she will have to seem to consult old crusty Kavanaugh, if only in compliance with her husband's absurd will, and break it to the boys and the little girl, and even the domestics. Slaves are tyrants about these matters and expect to be considered and consulted even. This will all be effected in my absence. I cannot doubt for a moment that her heart is mine, has ever been, as mine is and ever has been hers—that is the best part of it. Of course I loved and cherished my poor Minna, but there was no passion there, and its re-awakening makes me young again." By this time they had reached Miss Minande. Major Ravenshaw had been introduced to the governess, whom he saluted with a profound and serious bow. A pretty woman was to him a princess and a prize, whether she wore jewels or affected wax-beads, and he found Mademoiselle Minande enchanting when she looked up and smiled and showed her pearly teeth and purple eyes, then pensively laying down her crochet-work, took his disengaged arm, which, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Thermor clung to the other and averted her face, he would persist in offering the obliging young musician.

"Il est gentil homme;" she thought, "et beau comme un Prince. Il est trop noble pour elle, mais cependant ils ont l'air d'être fait l'un pour l'autre;" and she went meekly to the piano and her allotted task.

Then came a repetition of that wondrous performance, that had thrilled all hearts before, and the intense silence of her auditors gave proof of their appreciation.

Even Rivers and Clara Lindsay came in from the piazza to listen, still standing arm-in-arm in the doorway when the music was over, a situation one of them found pleasant.

"Why don't you marry that girl and make a fortune out of her gifts and yours combined?" said the impertinent young belle—who had chosen to stroll with the artist, whose society she enjoyed, rather than be condemned to the society of the indigenous youth of the Bay settlement—having failed to attract Major Ravenshaw from his allegiance, as she had desired to do, and despairing of better entertainment. "Now don't be vexed; come, tell me frankly the reason why. I am one of your defenders and ask from interest and not from curiosity."

"For two reasons," he replied mildly. "One of these is, I do not love Minande; another is, she does not love me," and he bowed and smiled.

"What absurd nonsensical passions you artistic people can get up whenever you desire! It is not involuntarily like poor common-place folks, who 'grow' like Topsy, unconscious of their parentage!"

"Grant your premises; one may not wish to light an altar on which there are sorry offerings to lay—which would soon burn down to a very small pinch of ashes."

"You prefer human sacrifices?" she said, looking at him steadily; "you burn your own heart instead, before a priestess merciless as fate."

"One cannot tell whether a sacrifice will be propitious or not, until the savor thereof climbs to the nostril of the

tutelary deity," he said lightly; yet with a load of lead lying at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of which he wished his fair tormentor was deposited, under Oman's green waters, along with that everlasting "Araby's daughter," she was so fond of, a wail that always reminded him of the possible singing of the white cat in the fairy tale, before she regained her right to woman's estate! accompanied as these were, according to the chronicler, by ell-like twanging of her little golden harp or guitar, when the exiled prince came dog-seeking to her secluded castle. Very absurd thoughts often dart through our wretched brains, and this surely was one of them. But he was not yet suffered to shake off his torturer (for this word beseeemed her best—beautiful as she was in her snowy scarf and lustrous lilac grenadine—on this trying occasion).

"Mr. Rivers, which do you think is most absurd, for an old woman to marry a young man, or for a young man to wed with an antique simpleton?" she asked, mischievously. "It is solely a social problem—which I propose for the benefit of society—that has puzzled me not a little lately."

You may be sure, indignant reader, that Gertrude Lindsay, with all her innocent *naïvete*, had made her own observations during her sister's absence, and reported to that fair gossip, on her return, accordingly; of which reports these questions were but a compendium.

"I am sure, Miss Lindsay, I never gave the subject two thoughts; you—you must excuse me," and he groaned inwardly.

"Oh, certainly, you are very excusable under the circumstances. By-the-by, what a noble-looking couple

Mrs. Thermor and Major Ravenshaw would make—I mean as man and wife, of course.”

It amused her to feel the artist’s arm tremble, here, or twitch rather nervously, but she pursued her subject ruthlessly, for she had her share of suffering.

“You know there was an old love-affair between them; but they were poor, and both married for money. Now that they are old and rich, it is so romantic to see them drawing near again to one another, for their affection was undisputed, although they so wisely preferred plenty apart to poverty together. Aunt Constance, who has always been intimate with Mrs. Thermor, knows all this to be true, and is as deeply interested in their reconciliation as if it were her own affair.

“Poor thing! no such good luck awaits her, I fear. But I am really afraid I bore you. The matter under discussion can afford you very little interest, indeed!”

“On the contrary, the deepest; pray proceed. I, like your Aunt Constance, almost identify myself with this romance. Imagination lends this power in compensation for much harassment, you know, to her votaries; so tell me all you know; tell me everything.”

She was absolutely frightened by the calm, locked-look of his features, by the husky composure of his voice, and a certain hardness about it in utter discord with his words, as though he had just come out of a bitter December blast, which had pierced to his vitals. I believe we all know that altered tone of voice. As she accidentally touched his hand she found it icy cold. She had not deemed such emotion possible from such a cause; having looked on his love pretensions hitherto as entirely mercenary, and Mrs. Thermor merely as a flattered



passé, though still pretty coquette, who had partially compromised herself through vanity alone.

Partly through good-will toward the young artist—so soon she saw to be victimized—and partly through the womanly instinct that so often seeks to foil the coquetry of a sister sibyl, she had ventured to hint, it must be confessed, rather broadly, at her convictions, and so save him, if possible, from the humiliation and Mrs. Thermor the triumph in store for both, when his passion, if such it were, should be disclosed ; but she knew now that she had gone a step too far, even for her own good, and suspected that she had spoken too late. These thoughts, of course, flashed through her mind much more rapidly than I could write them ; and with the reflection, “Can it be possible, after all, that he really loves her?” she hastened to soften the impression she had made, shocked at her own impudence no less than amazed and distressed at his emotional agitation.

“The fact is there is very little more to tell,” she had replied to his appeal for all she knew, “and all this is problematical—of course I mean Aunt Constance’s idea that they will be married. He does not look much like a marrying man. His wife was deaf and dumb, and I suppose he could never bear with another. She died of consumption two years after their marriage, and left him unexpectedly very rich. It was some old mine, I believe. I suppose he will select a young and beautiful girl if he married at all,” bridling as she spoke, “men of that age always do. It is one of the infatuations that precedes dotage.”

“He seems much attracted by Mademoiselle Minande,” said Rivers, abstractedly.

"I hope that he will make her an offer. She is so good—and so unhappy."

"Oh, do you think so? I think I never saw a happier or more industrious being; as to her goodness, we can know nothing at all of that. She puts us all to shame, though, by her accomplishments. Then she knows so much, her mind is a perfect bee-hive of golden stores, and she has them all in order, honey and wax divided and all in little cells just ready for use, yet she does not seem pedantic."

"Yes, that is truly the order of her mind, which is rare for a person of her genius."

"Oh, as for that, genius is another thing; you, 'par example,' have genius, hers is mere ability."

"Quite the reverse, Miss Lindsay, but I will not argue against myself, even for the sake of justice. Believe me a genius if you can and will. I unfortunately cannot share your conviction."

"You are too modest, too humble—I have always thought so. You will never succeed in that way, Mr. Rivers; you must push your way, insist, strive. Even in love, you know, your timid men are always unsuccessful. Now, look at Major Ravenshaw, just taking us all by storm, the beautiful widow as well! There is not a woman in the parlor who would not feel honored by one of his lordly smiles, or the dropping of his handkerchief, and Mrs. Thermor feels already for the first time that she has found her master."

"By heavens! if I thought so," suddenly burst out poor Rivers—to be silent the next moment—in the utmost confusion, which condition of things excited even Miss Lindsay's pity, for, laying her finger lightly on her

lip, as if both a warning to him to be discreet and a pledge of her own discretion, she suddenly dropped his arm and hastened away, feigning to have received some mystic signal from her mother across the room. Turning on his heel in the doorway, standing in which she had left him, Mazon Rivers plunged impetuously into the outer shadow.

A little sealed note lay on the table directed in the well-known hand of Miss Minande. It contained a few lines only, and enclosed a ring composed of two twisted enamelled serpents, which she stated had been sent to her by her friend, Madame Burgenheim, to deliver to him on the part of a young lady once an acquaintance of his, who begged in this way to release him from an engagement made under peculiar circumstances, now rendered impossible of fulfilment on both sides, and demanding back, through the agency of Miss Minande, a certain opal ring which she had given him in exchange of troth plight. Probably that Monsieur wears, was added.

No reasons for this demand and restitution were assigned, and he threw by the note with a feeling of weariness and impatience which gave no impulse to conjecture. He felt it, indeed, to be rather a relief to be done altogether with the past, though he had long ceased to look upon it seriously at all, and hoped he would not forget to hand to Mademoiselle Minande the opal ring on the morrow, so fruitful of event to him. But through the watches of that sleepless night, the words of Clara Lindsay continued to recur to his ear; and when he slept towards daylight, it was to dream that he was a black-robed priest, called to perform the marriage rite between Mrs. Thermor and Major Ravenshaw.

## CHAPTER VII.

I was, indeed, delirious in my heart,  
To lift my love so lofty as thou art;  
That thou wast beautiful and I was blind,  
Hath been my sin.—BYRON.

Why did she love him? curious fool be still—  
Is human love the growth of human will?—BYRON.

ON the dressing-table of Mrs. Thermor a note in the same clear superscription as that which had met the eyes of Mr. Rivers on the preceding evening on his much abused papier mache port-feuille was laid by Rena on the following morning.

It was of course from Mademoiselle Minande, and to Mrs. Thermor's extreme surprise, and, it must be confessed, to her relief as well, translated runs as follows, for it was written in French:

“MIDNIGHT, BIRK-BRAES, THE TELL CHAMBER—

“Mademoiselle Minande regrets to inform Mrs. Thermor that circumstances beyond her control will oblige her to leave Birk-braes in a few days. As there are yet wanting some weeks to the completion of her quarter, she begs, as a special favor, that her generous employer will suffer her to relinquish all claim to a salary justly forfeited by so sudden a resignation of office and departure. Mademoiselle Minande begs to thank Mrs. Thermor for the many courtesies of which she has been a grateful recipient at her hands during a stay which she is sorry not to be able to prolong. It is hoped by the writer of this note that no reasons for a change of plan may be demanded, as none will be assigned, and no

conjectures hazarded, as none could be correct, as to the causes, which have reference solely to the necessities and affairs of Mademoiselle Minande."

"Cool, upon my word, and somewhat supercilious as well, if such a thing could be on her part," exclaimed Mrs. Thermor, as she laid down the note and drew a long sigh of relief. "Well, of all effrontery going, commend me to that of a French bourgeoisie. How that woman has weighed upon me, to be sure; and what is strange, I never recognized it wholly, never felt it sensibly, until this moment." She thought, as she submitted herself to the skilful hands of Rena for her morning toilette, "I always felt as if there was a window open in my breast when she looked at me with those strange eyes of hers—a window with the curtain drawn back."

"I am looking frightfully this morning, Rena," she said, as she caught the first glimpse of herself in the mirror. "Give me the cold cream and my rouge-pot—not in very good taste at breakfast, but nobody ever suspects me for the hare's foot. It is true I am roseate or nothing, as somebody says or does not say, it matters not which, and I have a very stern ordeal before me to-day, to be sure!"

"The poor, poor fellow," and she drew a long heart-breaking sigh; then leaning her head upon her hand, sat silent so long that Rena thought it best to advise her of the flight of the enemy and admonish her in this wise:

"I knows you wants to be ready dis mornin' of all de 'ticular mornin's of de year, mistis, 'cause dat strange Gineral am walkin' up and down de umbra watchin' for

your disappearance, an' has been doin' so dis some time, or more, an' Mr. Rivers an' Miss Genie an' Miss Gertrude Lindsay—dey's in de flower-garden, makin' up bokays."

"And where is Miss Minande? Comb out my hair, Rena, and comb it gently, my head aches this morning. But really, it is very improper for those two little girls to be out there alone with that strange young man, and I should hold her responsible for Genie until the hour she goes."

"I seed her reading at her window as I passed, sittin' up like a lady what has no paid employment. Is she gwine away den, mistis?"

"Yes, very soon," aloud, "and the sooner the better," in undertones. "I wish it were to-day, this hour, this moment," aside.

"Do you still think her engaged to Mr. Rivers, Rena?" with a pensive smile.

"Can't say I does, mistis, and Juba has got it into his knotty head dat he's arter higher game—he! he! he! I tinks he mus' be crazy as a June bug, Juba included."

"Don't repeat such trash to me, Rena. What right has he to think?"

"Dat's what I tells him mos' ebery day, but it don't take no hole on him whatsoever; he will keep on thinkin', thinkin', like he wos white; but I don't pay no retention to him thoughts, mistis."

"That is right, Rena. Yet I believe I questioned you about your own. That seems a little inconsistent, doesn't it?" drumming with her fingers, as she spoke, on the lid of her dressing-case and paying no attention at all to Rena's discreet answer, which is therefore scarcely worth recording.

"The fact is," she said to herself, suddenly rising and summing up unconsciously aloud: "The fact is I am very well as I am; and old Mandamus says, when called in to see a patient on the mend, 'We will let well enough alone for the present.' What do I want with either of the incumbrances? Am I not free, independent, rich, even happy?"—drawing a deep self-contradictory sigh—"surrounded with troops of agreeable friends (God save the mark!) blessed with dear children, and good, devoted servants—well, well, a woman must be a great fool so situated to marry again."

"Dat's wot I sez, mistis, dat wot I sez; but Juba, he keeps on 'suadin' me dat you will never rest in dat mind; an' Rena, sez he, Rena, mark my words, it 'll nebber be an old man wat de mistis marries a second time, nebber in dis worle."

"Will you stop your gossiping and hand me my peignoir?" interrupted her mistress. "I had no idea I was talking aloud, and I wish you to comprehend once for all, Rena, that unless I address a remark to you it is not to be replied to nor reported. As for Juba, if I hear any more of his impertinence in the shape of comment on my proceeding, I will hire him out; just tell him so from me. And now look out of the window (I can't, you know, undressed as I am), and see if Miss Minande—those children, I mean—are still in the garden—or—or Mr. Rivers. I particularly wish to know; observe quickly, will you, Rena?"

"Dey has retired deyselves clean out of sight, mistis, and Miss Minande has done gone from the window to come down-stairs, I spec; but Mr. Rivers, he am promenading at dis time up and down the lilac-walk, dressed

in his best blue blousy, an' readin' a little pink letter. I spec it's de same wot you sent him, from de looks ob de color," and she rolled her eyes very innocently at Mrs. Thermor—subtle hypocrite that she was—and smiled inwardly to see her mistress smile outwardly.

"You is looking a heap better now, mistis," she said, as the last touch was added by her own skilful hands to the ravishing morning toilet. "I 'clare, you are as pretty as a pink, an' beats 'em all; even Miss Genie can't hold a candle to you."

"Rena, be still; your clatter deafens me. There, give me the cologne-water. Just a drop on my handkerchief; now, another on my palms. There, that will do," and she went away radiant and refreshed—and wretched.

"She'd a heap rudder go out, and walk up and down wid young Mr. Rivers, instead of promenading on de umbra wid dat old-looking Ginerall; but I knows wats wat, an' de first chop, high quality like Miss Isabella Ruffin Thermor don't dar to follow out der likins and dislikins like poor white trash; but dey has to marry suitable to der condition—dat's de law hereabouts. Yes der dey go—sure enough. She leanin' on his arm, so lovin', too. Well, I nebber! wen I knows as well as dat May cherry-tree in de garden, dat she lubs in her heart dat 'greeable young artistman's little finger better dan dat ossifer's whole head; and, fur my part, I don't see how any one could help it, wid dat sweet smile of his'n, an' dem big bright eyes, and dat curly hair, jis like Massa Ruffin's. Wen Miss Minande—well—it ain't none o' my business nohow to be talkin' about her"—and with this moral and somewhat contemptuous reflection, Rena addressed herself to the careful arrangement



of the wardrobe and chamber of her mistress, the care of whose comfort occupied her whole being.

It was determined by Mademoiselle and Eugenie that they would spend the morning in reviewing what store of French the first had been able to impart during her brief stay to the bright, devoted child she had learned to love fondly (lessons being at an end), in the retirement of the ell-chamber occupied by Miss Minande, and for this purpose they ascended there very soon after breakfast. While Genie was glancing over her last exercises, comparatively and diligently, Miss Minande suddenly bethought herself of a book she had left in the pavilion, and making, perhaps, a pretence of her wish to obtain it before she should forget its very existence, she hastened thither, intending to leave on his table a little present for Monsieur Rivers, in the shape of a purse knit by her own hands, in the lining of which she had sewn a scrap of paper that she hoped he would some day find.

To her surprise, he was there, not only in spirit, but in person—having ascertained in some inscrutable way that her lessons were ended, and that she would occupy the pavilion as a school-room no longer. As he saw her he looked up and smiled, for he thought her errand was for the opal ring, demanded through her hands, and half expected this visit, though not at such a moment.

“Here it is, Mademoiselle, ready and waiting, though I am sorry to part with it. It has been almost a talisman to me for many years,” he exclaimed.

She received it calmly, or rather stretched forth her hand to do so; but he, holding her light wrist very gingerly, put the ring himself upon her finger, after with-

drawing it from the fourth finger of his left hand, which it had fitted, and where he had worn it long.

"It just fits your first finger," he said, "and becomes it well," and again in his foreign fashion he lightly kissed her hand, which she instantly withdrew, coloring violently as she did so, but scarcely it seemed in anger; though why a mere customary national salute of her hand should have agitated her so deeply he could not understand. "Little prude," he thought compassionately.

"You will have better fortunes now—better luck, I trust," she said gently. "The opal is said to be a stone that bears no happiness to its possessor."

"Thank you for the wish, though I never knew the fact you state before. It may indeed be ominous of happier days that it is withdrawn; yet I trust its shadow may not be cast elsewhere." And he sighed. "Give it, I pray you, with all good wishes, to the sweetest creature it was ever my lot to know, yet not to see (disfigured by small-pox though she was said to be), from the mystery she externally affected."

"But you forget that it is to Madame Burgenheim I shall surrender this ring, according to the directions contained in my letter. I shall probably have no opportunity of conveying your message to the invisible girl. Moore wrote about one, you remember. I happened to read the poem lately in turning over his works in order to find his great poem of 'Lalla Rookh.' At that time I intended to obey the injunctions of Mrs. Thermor by taking a part in her fancy ball; now all is changed." And she shook her head sadly.

"And you are going back to France, Mademoiselle?"

“Oui, Monsieur; to bury myself forever with my protectress at Les Hirondelles. I am fit only for seclusion, and, alas! perhaps for captivity.” And she sighed.

“Perhaps, also, I may return to France shortly,” he pursued, “if only for a season, and if my escort thither—but no, I cannot yet decide upon my course; matters are still too uncertain with me, too painfully uncertain,” and he rose and paced the room, while his fine face glowed with emotion. Then suddenly pausing, he addressed Mademoiselle Minande with outstretched hands and eyes full of a noble trust and truth of appeal.

“Wish me success in my enterprise, Mademoiselle; wish me success and favorable winds shall fill the sails of my ship of hope, for all things good and noble rest with you. In this I venture all—love, life, energy, liberty itself—all that is dear to man and favorable to prosperity; and an hour hence my fate will be decided. You prophesied ill for the termination of that romance yesterday, the last leaves being still unread, you said. I understand you. Can you not to-day recall your prophecy?”

“No, Monsieur. I earnestly wish for your sake that I could. Remember, it required a human sacrifice to propitiate the wind at Aulis. Prepare yourself for disappointment.” And she bowed before him.

Her words were low—her face was pale—and she turned aside her head to hide the gushing tears, preparing, as she did so, to depart; but he would not let her pass; he held her fast; his oracle must speak.

“No; you shall not leave me, my friend, my sister, in this land of commonplace and strangers, without one

look of kindness, one word of comfort, with again that reference to a bloody sacrifice upon your lips. I am so superstitious that such prophecies appall me! Strengthen and uphold me, Marie, for I faint, I falter! I, so confident, so elated but yesterday on the receipt of this note, which now, I fear, means less, far less than I had supposed in the first passionate moments of its perusal. There, read it, Mademoiselle, sister, compatriot, and see if to you it contains no underlying meaning, no hint of hope; or is it indeed nothing but words? 'Words, words signifying nothing,' as Hamlet says."

She read the note rapidly, thoroughly, as it was her gift to do, with the microscopic perfection and swiftness of sight given to the near-sighted as a partial compensation for much discomfort, to which, in her case, was added a sweep of mind that left nothing unnoted, undiscovered, unrecorded, wherever the vision penetrated.

"It is mere verbiage," she said. "It means nothing—or less than nothing. Do not, I entreat you, put yourself in this woman's power further than you have done. Do not, Mazon—do not creep at her feet. Remember what you owe yourself—me—our order. With all their faults, Bohemians never cringe!"

"Ah!" and he drew in his breath bitterly, "it is precisely that from which I must escape. When I determined to give up my art—if such, indeed, it be—I meant to throw over Bohemianism as well."

"And all its concomitants?"

"Oui, Mademoiselle, with one exception—yourself."

"There is no question of me, Monsieur, in such relations. I stand alone." And she drew up her slight form proudly. "I, who hold myself, poor and unknown

as I am here, a head and shoulders above any one of my sex at Birk-braes, except the child Genie."

He looked at her with a strange expression of puzzled surprise—a dawning wonder. He had not found her boastful before. Such daring, such conceit, were beyond his comprehension—on her part.

"You certainly except Mrs. Thermor, *ma petite Gasconne*?" he said in a low tone of supremest reverence and scorn combined, while he bent his head and gazed inquiringly into her eyes. "You certainly except our hostess—yours and mine; that peerless beauty and incomparable lady?"

"He should have lived in the old knightly times," she thought, while a faint smile quivered across her features, for she liked (strangely enough) this phase of his character best. "Lived when he could have worn his lady's colors upon his helm and saddle bow, and charged with his fiery lance all persons incredulous of her charms." But she only replied, after a very slight hesitancy, returning him look for look,

"I do not except Mrs. Thermor, noble Quixote."

"Mademoiselle, you amaze me!" he rejoined, coldly, incredulously. "Quixotic as you deem *me*, I had not supposed such self—" and he paused, too polite to proceed.

"*'Self-knowledge;*' let me finish your sentence for you. I suppose that is what you intended to say, is it not? Such independence, perhaps that was the word you intended, the better word of the two, applied to me. You see I know myself, at least."

"Such vanity, Mademoiselle, if you demand the truth, in one who seems so simple, yet so just," he added with

a flashing eye and heightened color, which became him well. So thought magnanimous Mademoiselle, smiling sorrowfully.

She looked upon his condition with the sad pitying, yet prophetic eyes of a wise physician, pondering some peculiar phase of fever and confident that, with God's help and the assistance of his sound constitution, he may still bring his patient through to health again.

The rebuke was sharp, but who cares with what weapon a delirious patient assaults his watchers, so that they be quick enough to parry the attack? No affront can be given, no insult felt from an utterly irresponsible hand. Mademoiselle Minande knew well that the last point of infatuation had been reached, nay, passed, by Mr. Rivers before he could have thus accosted her.

Had she not, too, in some measure, made herself liable to such insolent reproof by her own haughty independence of piqued comparison? Had she not shaken the red rag before the very eyes of the infuriated bull, and could she wonder at his assault? Something of this kind must have passed through her mind, for, quick and sharp at repartee as she was, and prone to it, too, and vivacious of nature, she answered him mildly and dispassionately, with no effort at badinage.

"Listen, my friend, and be reasonable," she said. "Women and men set separate and widely different estimates on one another. Mere beauty, mere perfection of toilet, are not to a sensible female mind the 'sine qua non,' that men find them in women. All that richness of array that dazzles you my eyes have feasted on in the streets and shop-windows of Paris, until they grew wearied of the repetition. All that full-blown rose and

somewhat meretricious style of beauty is a thing well understood by spectators of society—mere spectators such as I have been, I acknowledge, *only*—such as you never were. Thus it is new and bewildering to you, as it cannot be to one who has tested disinterestedly all unrealities and all delusions of fashion, and looks forward to the speedy falling of those wide-spread leaves of the too perfect rose, when there will remain only a bare and unlovely calyx, unattractive to bee or bird, or even to man. I should be wanting to myself, to my Creator, did I not value my own substantial gifts more than these dubious ones, already passing away, or the worldly store of wealth with which Mrs. Thermor is endowed. Do you suppose for one moment I would place my six-and-twenty years of youth and strength, unimpaired by sickness or dissipation, such as women of the world indulge in—my lithe and supple form—my poverty—my clear, cool brain—my independent views—my ardent fancy—my devoted, faithful disposition—my many and hard-earned accomplishments—my efficiency and mere prettiness, which answers well enough for me—against her almost forty years—her gold—her excess of flesh (you men call it *embonpoint*)—her want of muscle, of strength, both mental and physical—her poverty of resource—her fickle and inconstant temper—her devotion to conventionalities—her indifference to friends (for she cares for nobody beyond the moment)—her absolute incapacity for all save conventional religion, and her tastes as changeable as the silks she wears? and to crown all these—her helplessness?

“No, Mazon Rivers, I revoke no word of what you are at liberty to consider vaunt or vanity, if you will.

Yet she is the best of all of them—all here except her child, who is pure gold, a jewel undefiled and beyond price. The rest are dross and rubbish. The Lindsays, the Blakes, the Donnellys—why name the rest? I simply mean all that set of women, except Rose Blamire—the wild Scotch rose—and perhaps the elderly Miss Constance, whom I know but slightly, however; so nervous is she; not much older than Mrs. Thermor, if truth be told, only less beautiful and less indebted to art, and far less artificial in her views. The time approaches fast when the scales shall fall from your eyes, and you will think with me. Until then, farewell. I may not be here when the blow descends; but, if I am, I will do what I can to save and serve you,” and, turning, she was gone, leaving him confounded.

An hour later he wended his way to the library, having previously made the very best toilet he could command from his slender resources, and looking, it must be acknowledged, every inch the gentleman.

Colonel Kavanaugh and Major Ravenshaw, who enjoyed one another amazingly, each having a fund of army anecdotes to recount, had wandered off to be gone, as they said, all the morning—first to the beach, and later, followed by Juba, with guns, to the marshes. The Lindsays, one and all, were off in the carriage, returning some neighborhood visits, from which arduous duty Mrs. Thermor had begged to be excused (even while urging the necessity of paying their social debts upon her guests and delaying their discharge no longer). So that the forces had all been skilfully or accidentally drawn off from the citadel and the castle was in sole possession of its few occupants—the lady of Birk-braes and her enam-



ored knight, Genie, Mademoiselle, and, for propriety's pale sake, the numerous retinue of servants.

Mr. Rivers had not long to wait before Mrs. Thermor came gliding slowly and gracefully into the shadowed library, with her flowing white embroidered wrapper, her silken shoes and stockings, and her pretty floating ribbons of lace and rose, wafting with her that inexpressibly delicious odor, faint yet defined, breathing all about her—that whispered violets whenever she approached—so different from the dreadful musk of his splendid actress acquaintances in old times, that always suggest the stage and Cleopatra.

She came, and he was blessed, for the hallucination of yesterday had returned with full force, after he had time to recover from his astonishing interview with Miss Minande, and had compassionately forgiven her, on finding the little glittering purse of gray and gold, on his papeterie (in which it must be confessed he kept his cravats and collars, instead of paper, of which he possessed no store), with its affecting motto, “*Toujours pour toi*,” traced there in golden embroidery, and his own initials.

“Poor little thing, she likes me, I have no doubt, and means well,” as he shook his graceful head above this souvenir of friendship. “What a heart that man must have had, to be sure, that Frenchman, to crush her so utterly, for I gather this much at least from her own confession. I thought she despised me at one time, but I believe now she is about my best friend at Birk-braes. Now, of course, there are feelings beyond friendship; but I mean simply good-will and fidelity when I allude to hers. I never had the coxcombry for a moment to sup-

pose, nor do I wish, yet that deep blush of hers this morning *was* very suspicious. Suppose it were the case! Well, even if it were, it would be no fault of mine, and she would have to get over it as she best could, and certainly without my assistance; my destiny is different, for I must believe Isabella Thermor loves me; never, never otherwise could she have yielded her divine, pure lips to my possession! Put up her mouth even! Oh, heavens! how sweet it was—like a little child—half-soliciting my embrace—for otherwise I should never have dared. It was very natural that cool-headed petite Minande should have seen no undercurrent in that note. I was foolish to be depressed by her remarks, for how should she know what fair foundation I had whereon to build my hopes? Women like Mrs. Thermor do not bestow such favors save on the men they mean to marry.'

And thus had the confiding young man reasoned himself, however fallaciously, back into the very same condition of ecstasy which had lifted him up above all sublunary things the day before and the night preceding that day, so that Paradise seemed unveiling to his view when his fair hostess and inamorata entered, radiant and fresh as Aurora.

"You are truly punctual, Mr. Rivers," she said in her rich, cordial voice, as she advanced toward him; then passing him by, flung open one of the shutters of the nearest window, before she seated herself with her back to it, in one of the great gothic chairs adorning the library, huge and grand enough for Charlemagne himself.

Thus she confronted him and had him at disadvantage both; for while she could read the working of every

muscle of his face, her own was partly in shadow—a device which Henry IV. of France did not hesitate to employ (his historians say) at the battle of Ivry for the discomfiture of his foes. Adversaries are not lovers, nor entitled to the same consideration, yet we see the pleasing stratagem of war employed against them every day by coquettish tacticians of all ages. But to do Mrs. Thermor justice, she only wished on this occasion to hide her agitation, and perchance her tell-tale tears, for she suffered.

“You are truly punctual,” she had said, on entering, it may be remembered; to which Mr. Rivers had replied vaguely, and with an inapt smile: “That is the virtue attributed to kings, you know; but it is not punctual to anticipate, even if a lover,” he continued, finding her still silent after waiting a moment for her rejoinder. “I was afraid to keep you waiting, however; although you named no definite hour, I came at the earliest possible minute of the hour you mentioned as inclusive of our interview.”

Thus at once he assumed the privilege of a prolonged interview; for the school hours endured from nine until noon.

“I did not think,” she said, bridling slightly, “that school-hours were to end so suddenly when I made this appointment (if such it may called) for a mere every-day tête-à-tête such as ours must be. I wished in person to thank you, however, for your firmness and kindness during our little run-away adventure, when my head was turned by panic, before—before you left Birk-braes—and to assure you of my very best wishes for your success, not only in your profession, but in all other ways, to present

you with this pencil, one very dear to me from association, as a very slight testimony of my esteem and gratitude." She could not bring herself to say "affection," though the word bubbled up on her lips impulsively, as she spoke from the depths of her (it must be acknowledged somewhat shallow and ill-regulated, even if excellent and sympathizing) heart. So speaking, she extended to him graciously the handsome jewelled pencil of embossed gold, which, if truth be told, had once done good service in the vest-pocket of the deceased Mr. Thermor, and mechanically he rose and received it with a bow.

He was sitting on a sofa in the recess, and had hoped that she would occupy a seat beside him in the shadow when she entered, and had pictured to himself before she came a rapturous moment of troth given and received in such juxtaposition. He had even intended, because he possessed no other, to slide upon her finger the enamelled ring, representing serpents intertwined, with jewelled eyes and crests, which had been so mysteriously returned to him through Mademoiselle Minande, and which was exquisite in workmanship, if not intrinsically valuable as a pledge of his fidelity, when the sweet moment came, and when the rapturous and memorable carriage scene should be repeated, with addenda of kisses *ad libitum*, sighs, smiles and soft pressures of clasped hands. Such was the foolish fellow's fallacious dream of felicity.

How cruelly this expectation had been nipped in the bud we have just seen, and one can better imagine than describe the feelings of the high-strung and inexperienced young man, as he stood there for a few moments cold and pallid as stone, and speechless, with surprise, sorrow and offended pride he held the peace-offering to his withered

feelings suspended in his fingers, scarcely feeling its weight or conscious of its presence. At last he laid it quietly down upon the corner of the marble mantle-piece near which he stood, as mechanically as he had received it (where the housemaid found it next morning), then re-seated himself, without a word, still gazing at Mrs. Thermor with those large dilated, steady eyes that seemed almost as strong as his silence.

"I have chilled his ardor," she thought, but she did not in the least penetrate his emotion at the time, and was glad he took matters so quietly, though perhaps she was a little piqued as well; yet, when he spoke, she knew how she had misconceived him, and as each word came laboring from his breast, she pitied him inexpressibly—almost to compunction.

"You surely do not mean," he at last said falteringly, "you cannot mean that this is the end of all that went before!"

"Yes, I do mean it, Mr. Rivers, and I wish you could see it in its true light, instead of seeming so offended. It is a necessary conclusion to what was at best a very great weakness on my part, a folly on your own."

"Then you did love me?" he interrupted, passionately—leaning forward as he sat, and seizing her hands impetuously, which she suffered him to retain without a struggle—"do love me still, perhaps, in spite of this cruel and unlooked-for conclusion to all my hopes?"

She did not answer him, and silence confirmed his assertion.

"Bless me, at least, with such an acknowledgment," he pursued, after a moment's pause—in a husky whisper—"before we part, sweet saint, even if you send me forth

exiled and desolate from your shrine forever! Give me this alone! See, I fall prone before you, worship you, entreat you for the words that shall let me live! for, without them, I must perish utterly, here and hereafter!" As he spoke, gliding from the sofa, he knelt before her, still clasping her hands in his, and laid his head upon them so intertwined as a child might do on his mother's knee, while she felt his hot tears trickling over her fingers, his sobs shaking the very chair she sat on.

"Men that cry when troubled or enraged are dangerous bipeds," said a physiologist on a recent trial, when such evidence of idiosyncrasy had been alleged as a proof of soft-heartedness in favor of and on the part of a convicted homicide—and of this class was our gentle artist, as has been already seen, that is as far as the tears have gone.

It is otherwise with women. The dangerous ones (in the sense of our physiologist, dangerous to others by word or blow) are those that weep rarely. Mrs. Thermor was tearfully inclined by nature, a perfect April-day rain and sunshine, and in accordance with her own temperament and in sympathy with the man she loved (the secret is out now, reader, beyond retrieve), she too wept profusely. Her tear drops glittered on his shining hair, and she remarked its character and gloss as the light fell over it. She was sorry now that she had opened the shutter, the doing which, she had hoped, might prove a restraint on their conversation, as even on the secluded gallery servants were known to pass sometimes. But she thought it best to let him exhaust his grief in his own way before she should undertake the task of persuading him, as nurses do little children, that his physic was good and wholesome for him—not nauseous and bitter to the palate

—so that he might gulp it down and be done with it at one potent draught and go his way.

Yet had she followed her instincts then (and surely she is entitled to some credit in repressing them on the score of self-denial at least) she would have raised him, sad and despairing, from his knees, and thrown her white arms about him, and comforted him with the assurance that she would be his forever—or rather that he should be hers—as it would have been for her, not him, to sing, “Come live with me and be my love.”

But she did nothing of the kind. Contenting herself after shaking away her briny drops—for her hands were prisoners—in whispering softly in his ear, quick to catch her slightest accent, “You compromise me very seriously by such behavior, dear Mazon. Do rise and leave me. What if Miss Minande should glance this way, or Genie, or even the servants? Pray think of my peculiar position.”

“It surely is not my wish or province to do this,” he said, springing to his feet as impetuously as he had knelt down. “But Isabella, you must not send me forth without the consolation I demand; the confession in words of what you have already manifested by deed. Say that you love me, and I shall find food for consolation, even if bereft of hope.”

She had risen as he spoke, and stood confronting him almost as tall as he was, and greatly larger, and yet far more beautiful to him, even in the elimination of her charms, than any woman he had ever looked upon. With her eyes cast down, her hands clasped before her, her color coming and going, her bosom heaving tumult-

tuously, her whole demeanor that of shrinking modesty and suffering affection, she murmured softly—

“It is true—too true—I love you, Mazon!”

“I hope he will behave himself now,” she thought, “and go off quietly, for I do detest scenes, and somebody will be sure to come along presently.”

But again he grasped her hands tumultuously.

“Then if you love me,” he said in his deep and tender tone, “there is no reason that I should yet depart. Are you not the mistress of your own acts? Am I not free to come and go as the air that blows? Who questions of our right to love each other, or who so doing need be regarded more than the idle winds? Your Colonel Kavanaugh, your Miss Minande, who are they to put chains about our passion? Yet these are the wire-workers who seek to mar our fate and stand between us—being betrothed by heaven! Come, most adored of women, and if you love me truly, as you say, become at once my wife, and set all these intermeddlers—your Major Ravenshaw amongst the rest—at stern defiance. Be true, be brave, Isabella Thermor! I await your answer.”

She had withdrawn her hands from his eager grasp, and he stood now leaning against the corner of the mantel-piece—pale and proud as she had not seen him before—with his arms folded upon his breast, his eyes flashing, his lips compressed, and the cold dew breaking over his polished forehead.

“He is beautiful,” she thought; “beautiful as a Greek god, and I love him so dearly. But I dare not! dare not! (oh, bathos again that expression) dare not face the music!” It was the only phrase she could think of



strong enough for the occasion, and, as once before, she invoked the aid of slang to help her through her mental difficulty—her Cretan labyrinth of incertitude.

“You are too young for me, Mr. Rivers,” she faltered at last. “My sons would be offended—my friends—my daughter Genie even—and what would they say in Baltimore? Oh, if you have any pity on me, go quietly and never come again!” And she hid her face in her hands and moaned, shedding bitter and blinding tears this time.

“Why did you not think of all this before?” he asked bitterly, “when you unveiled your charms so freely in the atelier to my admiring gaze, and lavished glances upon me, and sweet smiles that might have stirred a heart in the breast of a marble statue? I was mad enough then to pour out my soul at your feet—daring enough—but your mild resentment froze me into silence and repentance, and I might have stifled my passion as Othello did the outcries of Desdemona, so that no wail of its expiring agonies should ever have reached your ear, but for the scene so recently enacted in the carriage. The barriers were then broken down on either side, and your soul mingled with mine in one long, passionate kiss, that even your coldness cannot erase from my remembrance, nor from my lips, no more than from your own. I have deemed you pure as Diana, and supposed this salute the pledge of life-long affection, not the passing favor of a grasping coquette, insatiate to destroy; and”—he added low—“a wanton, heartless woman of the world!”

His mad, his bitter, his unbridled words had stung her to a sense of what he suffered, and what she had

done, and to an admiration, strange to say, that she had never felt for him before. Yet, mingled with this, was a just, womanly indignation, which found vent in some sentences very unusual to her moderate, matronly mind and mode of expression.

"You insult me, sir!" she said, with quivering lips, "and your insult shall not pass unnoticed. You presume too far on the helplessness of my condition; the immature boyhood of my sons. But there are others willing and ready to avenge my wrongs. I—a lady"—and she faltered here, unable to proceed. "Isabella!" and his hand was on her arm—not from fear, as she fancied, of her menace, but from the anguish of having offended her; the despairing of any possible future reconciliation should they part in anger now.

"Forgive me!" he exclaimed, "and have pity on me, a wretch, whose wild words only mean despair and death!"

But she shook off his hand as if it had been a serpent, and turned away hurriedly to leave the room and his presence—the last forever as he felt assured from the dread voice that whispered in his breast a warning knell.

With a wild cry, like that of some hunted creature, he sprang after her, stayed her on the threshold by clasping her wrist before she could unclasp the door, and his face as he turned it to the light was utterly despairing and livid with emotion.

"You would not leave me thus," he said passionately, "knowing how dearly I love you, as you never have been, as you never can be loved again. One word—only one word—say I am beloved, Isabella, and you shall be free to go—nay, more, I will promise never to seek you again!"

"Boy, you are mad; unhand me on the instant, open the door for me and let me pass, or Major Ravenshaw shall hear of this," she said, harshly.

"Major Ravenshaw!" he bitterly repeated, releasing her instantly. "Do you think I care for any opinion or act of his? It is for you alone, most cruel, most adored of women, that I take heed or thought in all this empty world. As for that insolent officer—"

"He is at your service," interrupted Major Ravenshaw, as he stepped unceremoniously through the open window, sword-cane in hand. "Unhand that lady, sir, as I heard her bid you do a moment since, by the merest accident, or you shall receive a taste of this," and he brandished his trusty cane, which in many a combat with wild bear and wolf, or serpent, had stood him in good stead.—"Now leave the room instantly, you insolent Bohemian. Do you hear me, sirrah?"

"We are both guests here on equal terms, I believe," said the young man steadily, aroused to a sense of what he owed himself and appearances on her account, and commanding himself to moderation for her sake alone. "I will not bandy epithets in such presence, and whether I leave this room or remain herein until it suits me to withdraw depends solely on the fiat of the lady of this house." Then bowing low before her he said: "I give you the alternative, madam, once for all, Mrs. Thermor, you can choose between us, this man or me for life."

Strange inconsistency of womanhood! After all that he had done to annoy and grieve her; all that he had said to outrage and offend her from the first to the last of that ill-starred and indiscreet interview, she hesitated one moment as to the course she should pursue.

“Thought, like a sword dividing the swift wind,” convulsed her as she stood with her hand upon the handle of the door, uncertain as to whether she should link her fate defiantly with that of the man she loved for life, and face Mrs. Grundy and all her myrmidons, or turn and fly to her chamber, leaving matters to take their course, or, still better, assert herself mistress of her own house, order the artist to his atelier, the officer to his apartments—both under temporary arrest—with her emphatic command to keep the peace, and lose both her lovers at one fell swoop! What should—what must she do? Already her eyes were turning involuntarily to meet the eyes of Rivers; already he felt his advantage and shivered with delight, when the tone of an unwelcome and jubilant voice without, and the words uttered, at once turned the scale. In another moment she heard Colonel Kavanaugh, who knew not where to seek her, calling shrilly from the piazza—not ten paces from the library windows—in those peacock tones of his, “Isabella! Mrs. Thermor, where are you? Ruffin has arrived. Come see your boy. There he is, as large as life, walking up from the strand.”

Every nerve in her mother’s heart was thrilled by this appeal and announcement, and her eyes, so lately turned towards Mr. Rivers, now glittered with delight and caught the sympathetic glances of Major Ravenshaw on their way to the window. There was no time now for further deliberation, all must be quickly done, if done at all, and in one moment the very thought of Ruffin and what she owed her boy adjusted the hitherto uncertain balance.

It is wonderful how quickly some women change

their moods and minds, from grave to gay, from lively to severe—nay, more, from trembling love to icy coldness and commanding dignity. There was a complete revulsion in the brain, heart, and manner of Mrs. Thermor.

“This is, indeed, a delightful surprise to me,” she said, advancing to the window. “Major Ravenshaw, your arm if you please; I tremble so I can scarcely venture to go alone and unsupported to meet my Ruffin! Yes, Colonel Kavanaugh! I am coming instantly. He is at the gate, the dear, dear fellow. I see him now myself. God bless the boy! How well he looks! Why, he is taller than Juba, who has found him out already. It is just a year!”

Then, stepping back as if recalling some slight, forgotten, yet necessary duty, she interrupted herself to say in tones of cold, and even mocking urbanity to that statue mask, Mazon Rivers, “We stand not upon the order of our going to-day, you see; we leave you in full and undisturbed possession of the library. I have the honor to wish you a return to your usual serenity of mind, and at the same time a very good-morning,” and with a stately superb sweep of the head she was gone—and forever.

Yes, he had lost her as certainly and irretrievably as the man who lets fall a gem of price into the sea loses his inestimable jewel. No gormandizing fish could ever be found to bring back to him in these days of commonplace the ring of Perdicus—gone, gone irretrievably.

Yet he was just as near winning her, this artist of ours, in spite of his infatuation—his green-horn-ism—and his second-rate, melo-dramatic enthusiasm and poor

performances, and in the face of his insensate and even unmanly reproaches (or rather perhaps, because of them, for she was a common-place sentimentalist, who did not always discriminate as to the finer touches) as ever was a gambler a desperate game who turned up a deuce instead of an ace! Strange that one spot should make so great a difference—strange, too, that the distant tones of a boy's jocund voice should be heard above all the haut-bois and clarions of the orchestra of passion and inclination. Oh! strong—and stronger—and stronger is maternity!

That day Ruffin took up the idea that that "jolly old cock"—a mere slang term, not at all applicable to the stately Major Ravenshaw, who was dark and stern and saturnine—would some day or other be his step-father.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Banished? The damned use that word in hell;  
Howlings attend it. How hast thou the heart  
To mangle one with that word—banishment?

SHAKESPEARE.

Must I give way and room to your rash choler?

SHAKESPEARE.

MISS MINANDE did not perceive the artist as he passed swiftly and silently to regain his refuge through the garden walk beneath her window, and where, after his seething brain had returned to comparative composure, he cast himself on his bed and lay mutely all day, trying to adjust his plans for immediate action.

With a wet towel on his head, and an ice-cold hand seeming to clamp his very heart in its inexorable grasp; with feet as chill as those of the dead, blood-shot eyes and a burning brow, it need not be said he was in no very fit condition to come to just conclusions.

Towards Mrs. Thermor his feelings had already undergone a profound revulsion, and in the first moments of his delirious despair he saw little cause to doubt that the opportune appearance of Major Ravenshaw on the scene had been the result of collusion or conspiracy of the blackest dye.

This thought he dismissed, however, upon consideration as insufficiently supported by such evidences as he could command, and he contented himself with thirsting for the blood of the impudent intermeddler who had ordered him like a beaten hound from his presence, and for the humiliation of the proud coquette who had swept

from him with such disdain in wishing him a last "good-morrow."

His passion of anger—even when it had quieted down from frenzy to stolid rage—literally, like jealousy (tinged with that jaundice of the mind as it certainly was), "made the food it fed on," and incited him to imagine cruelty and design of insult on many previous occasions, unsuspected at the moment, and now recalled with bitter and malignant satisfaction.

He made no effort to put aside the bitter cup of shame and disappointment that had been lifted to his lips, but drank it in all its fulness to the bitter dregs; and execrated in the same breath his pernicious folly, and the fair, false face that had occasioned it.

Juba, entering softly at dinner time with a tray of well-selected viands, was sternly motioned to withdraw with his ill-timed supplies, which he did unwillingly; and it was not until midnight that Mazon Rivers broke his bitter fast, on a crust of bread and cup of water that happened to be at hand on his mantel shelf. He then slept profoundly, and woke when it was nearly noonday, refreshed and tranquillized by his slumber, though scarcely yet himself.

When he rose on his elbow to look around him and recall his precise situation, he was not sorry, however, to see a breakfast tray carefully placed on a small stand near his atelier, and found himself, almost before he knew what he was doing, eating ravenously.

"So much for pride," he thought with a grim smile, "but, fortunately, I have made up my mind what to do, in the last ten minutes, and the sooner it is accomplished the better for all concerned."



In the meantime no one approached the pavilion except the invisible Juba, mysteriously bearing supplies, which he managed to insinuate into the little adjoining chamber, and occasionally a wandering gardener, who passed whistling to his work with spade on shoulder, as it was generally understood that Mr. Rivers did not wish to be disturbed in the prosecution of his painting, limited as was his time and slow as had hitherto been his progress.

This version of the matter, industriously circulated as it was by his charitable hostess (most desirous to shroud the heart of the mystery that enveloped Mr. Rivers and his disappearance from society—not alone for his own sake perhaps), was confidently accepted by all but two or three persons of the household of Birkbraes.

The scene in the library had passed without a witness beyond its actors, nor as yet had it been whispered beyond those walls within which it had occurred. Yet, already were the hound-like noses of Colonel Kavanaugh and Clara Lindsay upon the scent; Mademoiselle, too, had her own little suspicions which she kept very carefully to herself, avoiding the most trivial mention of Mr. Rivers, for fear of betraying them by the quiver of an eyelash.

Mrs. Thermor felt, under the circumstances, her despairing lover was pursuing the very most prudent course open to him, and, with the natural revulsion of her really good heart and easy temper, hoped yet to extend to him the hand of friendship and forgiveness before their final separation. In the meantime she was unaffectedly absorbed with Ruffin, who was a brilliant type of her own family. Her blue-eyed boy, with his flush complexion and curling hair, his gayety, frankness and facile temper,

so different from her dark-browed Charlie's—his father in miniature—or Genie's calm, good sense.

Shut up with her cherished darling and his sister, she made him recount for their entertainment, in his own fluent, off-hand way, all the adventures he could possibly remember, and perhaps invent, incident to his wanderings by land and sea.

Like most youths of good condition who enter our navy, early he had seen something of foreign and even barbarous courts—had stories to tell of the Sublime Porte and of the great Czar Nicholas, as well as of that milder-mannered man, Louis Napoleon, and his lovely Eugenie, then newly-made Empress of the French.

Sometimes Major Ravenshaw would beg to be included in the charmed circle, and it was curious to see how he delighted in the animated and varied discourse of the travelled boy, and how implicitly he confided in many of his most extravagant relations!

Had he ventured to lift an incredulous eyebrow even, it is more than probable that his influence would have been at an end, but whether real or feigned (and let us believe from all we know that it was the first), the interest he manifested in Ruffin grappled him with hooks of steel to the heart of the lad's very maternal mother, for there are several degrees of this same maternity, or hen instinct, as we all know.

Yet there were moments, and bitter ones, when, even in the midst of such enjoyment, a sense of the misery of one in some sort dearer to her than all the rest would intrude sharply, and when she felt she would have given worlds just to hear one sweet low voice pronounce her name in accents of affection and forgiveness. At such

seasons, her face, a very expressive one emotionally, would so suddenly cloud over that Major Ravenshaw would inquire anxiously what ailed her, and Genie would go for the salts or cologne water, ever at hand, and even obtuse, vain, vagarious Ruffin would say impetuously, "Now, mother, if I bore you, just speak out and let me cut short my yarn. There's nothing makes a fellow feel so cheap as to let out too much cable for safe anchorage."

"Yet, after all, what had she to forgive—was it not he alone who had offended?" So her train of thought would run, when she had quieted all the anxiety of her circle, smoothing her brow, and denying fatigue, commanding her lips to smile.

"What words were those he had employed in the course of his bitter recriminations so utterly undeserved," for thus she persuaded herself; "what names had he not applied to one who had never before in the course of her whole life, never save for him, laid aside the severe modesty of maid or matron? And this was his gratitude for her earnest, loving impulse! her great self-sacrifice! Thus dearly had she purchased remorse and self-contempt and shame!" She would then veil her eyes at this reflection. "No, it was she who had all to forgive, and until he humbly sought such forgiveness it should never be extended to him, even if he went away offended and so remained for life. Let him—who needs care!"

Despite these reflections, and many similar ones, she was deeply affected when on retiring for the night, after the lapse of twenty-four hours, she found lying on her dressing-table a very business-like looking letter directed in the flowing hand of Rivers. The pressed Bath paper and perfumed wax of the library had been rejected on

this occasion in favor of some meagre stationery from the adjacent village of Sandpiper, in a spirit of manly independence as commendable in itself as its results were mean and unsatisfactory—for even a note or letter has a physiognomy of its own, according to its getting up.

Yet, had no rose-tinted paper or gold mosaicised sealing-wax ever so moved her! It was well, perhaps, that Rena had been dismissed before she perceived it, though, of course, through her ministrations alone, could it have found place upon her toilet-table, and that Genie, whose observation she had reason to fear, was coiled up in bed as sound asleep as a dormouse in winter-quarters.

She tore it open eagerly and could have kissed it, and very beautiful she looked beneath the lamplight, as she read this note—the last she knew that she should ever receive from the man she had so loved (for had she not acknowledged this much, even to him?) She was far more beautiful in her long, white cambric gown, delicately trimmed with lace, and her waving hair hanging below her waist in soft, rich masses, in her bare, white feet, and her full, uncorseted form, firm and sound as marble, closely developed by the clinging night-dress, than arrayed in the silken sheen she so much affected and admired.

For all that was false and frivolous about her had disappeared as from the motion of a magician's wand, and her face wore an expression of depth and tenderness which one might have vainly sought for in the presence of those she strove to please.

Ithuriel's spear had touched her as she read—the magic talisman of truth.

Yet what could be more commonplace or less satisfactory than this parting letter, in which "the favor of the loan of a cashmere shawl!" was asked in the beginning, and a contemptuous pardon for all transgressions demanded in the end? The pattern of the corner of the drapery was not completed, but an hour's use of the shawl, he thought, would suffice to remedy the deficiency; and, the picture being the property of another, he had no right, he said, to forward it otherwise than perfect, as far as such details could make it so.

The concluding sentence was blistered with one large tear of concentrated rage, and not of affection, as she conceived it—a dangerous tear, as are all such, and one speaking little for the hope of reconciliation that animated her gentle woman's breast.

"Madam," so ran the finishing phrase of this brief and iron-bound note—which yet had stirred her as never yet had blandishment of love—"Madam—with the best wishes for the serenity of your surface life, and the long preservation of that peerless beauty with which your happiness and the wretchedness of others have been of late so closely connected, and with thanks for your constant courtesy as hostess and patroness—I bid you an eternal farewell!"

No name, either from oversight or intention, followed this valedictory, yet had it been written in characters of flame it could not have glowed more vividly before her—"*Mazon Rivers*"—Alas! alas! was it not inscribed as indelibly on her heart as the word "Calais" on that of Queen Mary?

"It is all over," she thought, with a dreary sigh, as she sat with clasped hands and drooping head, gazing on

the white blank wall before her—not blanker than her feelings as she mused those mournful words, “It is all over, and better so—for their sake—for Genie’s—for Ruff’s—for poor, dear, sensitive Charlie’s—even for mine! But oh, it is so hard to turn from him to Ravenshaw, and I feel that is my fate.

“There may be one little coal left, but I cannot find it, grope as I may among these cold, dead ashes of my past. Talk of eternal love! It is all sheer nonsense, and when once a passion burns down to cinders and dies, it is done with and forever. After that attachment is the substitute, but altars to Cupid any more from these same cinders are out of the question. My God! how dear he still is to me! How fatally dear!”

And she clasped her arms tightly across her bosom, and threw up her eyes to heaven, surely never looking half so beautiful before. The correspondence of Mazcron Rivers has not been an exclusive one on this occasion. Another iron-bound note on the paper obtained from Sandpiper—whitey-brown, with a strong odor of rock candy and tobacco lingering about it—had found its way thither, transported on a silver salver by the hand of Juba to the sanctum of Major Ravenshaw about sunset of the same evening, which, after reading with difficulty in the dying light, he crumpled in his hand, and, so securing it, descended to consult with Colonel Kavanaugh.

He found that worthy lounging in the umbra, in company with a highly perfumed Havana, but otherwise fancy free. Making him a telegraphic signal, the two gentlemen strolled in a leisurely manner and profound silence toward the beach, until the house was fairly

distanced and all fear of surreptitious listeners left behind.

Major Ravenshaw then, for the first time unclosing his hand, revealed the crumpled note, and the cause of his mysterious conduct so amply accounted for by the contents, when once unfolded.

"See here, Colonel Kavanaugh," he said, while a faint smile quivered over his fine features, for the situation had for him its ludicrous side. "See here what Florizel, the prince of Bohemia, has been inditing to me. The scamp evidently wants to make a hero of himself at my expense. Of course I cannot and will not fight him here under Mrs. Thermor's very nose—roof, I mean," and handed the document he had so recently received and carefully read to Colonel Kavanaugh.

"Read it aloud, Kavanaugh—that is, if you can see—and let us hear how it sounds." And he lit the cigar he drew from his breast at the waning fire of that still held between the teeth of his companion, who read aloud, with this incumbrance, in a somewhat mumbling manner:

"MAJOR RAVENSHAW:—[It begins queerly; why does he not say dear sir?] I ask at your hands the satisfaction that one gentleman has the right to demand of another who has insulted him—for your aggressive behavior to me in the library of Birk-braes—and in the presence of Mrs. Thermor [the infernal puppy!] I hope it is not necessary to urge the greatest possible expedition and secrecy in this matter, on a gentleman of your calling; and I must further beg you (irregular as may be this proceeding) to dispense with seconds—or yourself procure one for me—as I have no friends in this region.

[The devil! what right has he to expect friends? A paltry artist!]

"I have the honor to subscribe myself, very indignantly, your foeman,

"MAZERON MARK RIVERS."

"What a long tail our cat carries." And with this remark the reader handed the letter to its owner.

"Now, what in the world am I to do, Kavanaugh? I have been too long out there," nodding westwardly, "where men sell their lives as dearly as they can, and where white men are too scarce to kill one another—all forming a league against wild beasts and Indians, to be willing to stand up and be pinked or shot at like a German student. And yet I don't want to hurt the fellow's feelings by refusing; I don't, indeed. Do advise me."

"You forget that you have not yet deigned to make me any explanation as to the cause of the feud," said Colonel Kavanaugh, flinging the stump of his cigar away and drawing himself up a little stiffly. "Under such circumstances my advice would be little worth, if indeed, useful at all."

"Why, really, I don't know that it would be exactly fair on the fellow's own account to do that, for you see how much stress he seems to lay in this silly note (just such as a woman dressed up in man's clothes would consider a challenge) on secrecy. He feels mean, of course, after behaving as he did, and I pity him; but I suppose I was aggravating."

"Why what on earth did you do to the Marmoset?" said Colonel Kavanaugh impatiently. "What could you



have done? Did you ridicule his simpering picture before Isabella, or charge upon his old lay figure with your society sword? I mean that ridiculous sword-cane appendage, or—”

“Come, come, Colonel,” said Major Ravenshaw, laughing, as he reddened slightly, “I can’t permit you to ridicule my trusty sword, whatever else you may do. King Arthur never liked his ‘excalibus’ any better than I do my Toledo blade—for such it is. It has destroyed more wild ‘varmints,’ panthers, cats, wolves, and the like, than any other bit of steel in the regiment, and I never carry any other weapon at home or abroad. But human blood has never yet soiled its peerless blade, and I trust never will. It was not a battle-blade you know, and I have the greatest horror of taking human life anywhere else than on the foughten field. There, of course, it is all right, legitimate and never to be regretted.

“But speaking of my sword, did you ever see a better tempered bit of steel than it is? You will say ‘just like its master,’” and he drew it smiling from its scabbard, and waved it around the colonel’s head with the glee of a boy exhibiting a favorite toy—waved it indeed, unconsciously as it seemed, so near the celebrated brown, curly wig that had there been any vitality in the hair it must have bristled, and as it was the keen, old gray eyes snapped and blinked before its blinding light.

“It is a splendid bit of steel. I vow,” said Colonel Kavanaugh, making an excuse of his admiration for the shining weapon to reach forth his hand for it, take it, and bend it so the two extremities met with a vague hope of snapping it in two. Then suddenly suffering it to spring back again to its slender length, he seized the

scabbard and returned it safely to its abiding place, and to its owner's hand as well, with the significant words:

"But, speaking of your sword, other matters have been forgotten or overlooked. This boy and his absurd challenge 'par exemple!' Do tell me what it is all about. As Isabella's name has been introduced, I begin to think that it behooves me to know."

"Well, so it does, perhaps. Yes; I see what you mean exactly. Now listen then," and he lowered his hitherto somewhat excited voice. "Of course, on such a subject the profoundest mystery must prevail, or that boy Ruffin will be in the *mêlée* before we can prevent it. He is all fire, we know. It was simply this: on the day we returned from duck-shooting—yesterday, wasn't it?—just as Ruffin entered the gate of the grounds, and you were seeking Mrs. Thermor to announce his advent, I chanced to pass the library window, never dreaming she was there, heard voices, hers stopped, and naturally turned in, to find the young miscreant making violent love to Isabella. I saw her from the open window as I entered, pale as death, doing her best to escape from his insolent grasp."

"Grasp? you astonish me, Ravenshaw! What audacity—young Rivers! Are you certain? Upon my word, I think I am the proper person—" and he scowled fearfully.

"He does not agree with you, it seems," said Major Ravenshaw, dryly, "nor yet might Isabella; nor will you think so yourself, I fancy, when you have heard the particulars of the affair, to which I pray you give your close attention;" and, walking him away still farther from the house, as if in the excess of caution he suspected the

breeze from the bay of some evil intention of tale-bearing, nor was he far wrong there, the Major related, as succinctly as possible, the whole scene as it had transpired in the library after his advent, to his surprised yet somewhat mollified companion.

"You were rather hard upon the poor young fellow I think myself," said the old officer, who was now and then as just as Richelieu imagined himself always to be—"rather hard; such words as you employed can't be got over by any one above the condition of a boot-black or a free negro; and after all, to be plain with you, Ravenshaw, Isabella has herself to thank"—here he paused abruptly and gnawed his nether lip in a spirit of sudden pretended discretion, but out of the corners of his sly old eyes he saw with satisfaction that the hint had told.

"Herself to thank, Colonel Kavanaugh?" and the dark eyes of Ravenshaw flashed fire, and a tremor as of sheet-lightning in a summer cloud passed over his fine features. "Surely you are censorious if you mean to attach blame in this affair to Isabella Thermor. You cannot mean to allege coquetry on her part, or to give me the impression that she has encouraged this popinjay to make her such advances?"

"I am not so sure that I don't mean just what you think, Ravenshaw," laying his hand on the arm of his companion, "and yet, like you; come, be quiet now, I consider our Isabella (I suppose that is the idea now) 'chaste as the icicle that hangs on Dian's temple,' as the old swan sang. Yes, sir; the moon of Rome if you will—but flirt she did—and had a right to, and my two eyes are witnesses that with no such intention on her part this

green painter has been victimized. I pity the boy, and so, I believe, does Mademoiselle, who, like me, observes everything and holds her peace."

"Notwithstanding which habitual discretion on the part of both, she seems to have communicated to you the result of her observations," said Major Ravenshaw, with a sarcastic curl of the lip. "Well said the proverb, 'Deliver me from my friends, and from my enemies I will defend myself.'"

"You are too hasty, Ravenshaw," said Colonel Kavanaugh, with his peculiarly dry, disagreeable smile and gleam of the eye, both evincing on his part intense satisfaction at the success of some social scheme of discomfiture to friend or foe; "too hasty by half. Nice little thing as Mademoiselle is, she has too much sense to approach me confidentially. In her country the mark of caste is understood and seldom violated. She is not of our class at all, and she knows it, and with true self-respect never surpasses her limits. But I read all women instinctively that fall in my way; they are as clear as rock-crystal to my eyes, and I have been both saddened and amused watching the struggles of that poor little tender thing, and Isabella's high-handed manner of taking tribute. It was no more, of course, and all beautiful women are entitled to it, but most men have more brains than our little Parisian, the veriest candle-moth!

"But there is no sense in such digression. The long and short of it is, you must apologize, particularly as you say Isabella exonerated him from all but an earnest entreaty to be heard."

Major Ravenshaw stood for a moment as if weighing the matter, tearing the note he held in several pieces

as he pondered, and giving the fragments softly, each one in turn, to the evening breeze then sweeping the bay.

"A man that has been so long among the Seminoles, and fought as bravely as you have done, my dear sir, could never be suspected for one moment of showing the white feather," said Colonel Kavanaugh, encouragingly perhaps—mistaking the drift of his companion's musings—or perhaps only following the bent of his natural inclinations in lodging a Parthian dart; or haply, on second thought willing to foment discord between the lovers of his Helen, which it had been his first impulse to allay, as a man and gentleman.

Major Ravenshaw laughed grimly. The idea seemed somewhat to amuse him, as though one ray of the treacherous color could lurk among his eagle plumage.

Yet he only said, "A white feather was however a good omen at the battle of Ivry, Kavanaugh."

"Of course I jested, Major; do whatever you can to hush the matter up. That is all; for Isabella's sake, for the children's. Women of her age are rendered ridiculous by affairs of this sort. It is different with the young."

And again Mr. Ravenshaw flushed to the roots of his hair. "Of her age indeed! His beloved, his peerless Isabella, his own betrothed—for was she not such at last? And had not the affair at the library been so far fortunate for him that it had lessened his probation for a fortnight?"

But this was not yet to be spoken of even to Colonel Kavanaugh; so he only said in response to a portion of the last remark of that moralizing officer:

"Rest assured I will do whatever is best for her and them, as for myself also. I was only reflecting on the

awkwardness of the situation and whole proceeding, and making up my mind how best to leave no traces. We can never be sure of the honor of these foreigners, you know. They are so vain where women are concerned—so boastful; but standing here, I have resolved not to put my hand to paper at all, and, disagreeable as it will be, rather to apologize in person—I feel more like caning him, however, for his impudence, if truth be told. The audacious monkey! to presume to declare himself to Isabella Ruffin! to the magnificent Mrs. Thermor!”

And the sword-cane was stricken hard upon the ground, clanging as it came in contact with some pebble hidden in the sward, clanging in unison, perhaps, or sympathy with its master's angry spirit.

“When will you seek Rivers?” hazarded Colonel Kavanaugh; “would you like me to accompany you?”

“Thanks; I will go alone and sleep probably upon the resolution. In the meantime, we shall see him, I suppose, at a distance in the parlor, for Mrs. Thermor, in the great goodness of her heart, has, she tells me, through Juba, invited him to meet her friends this evening. I may have an opportunity, you know, of accosting him on the veranda. It is the first time I ever had such a task to perform. We shall see.”

By this time the twilight was deepening down, and the red tints in the west fading into grayness, so that the horizon seemed merged in the tranquil sea on one side and on the other in infinite space and vagueness. It was almost night when the steps of the companions who had so long held perturbed discourse were directed towards the illuminated mansion.

Among many others, Mademoiselle Minande was in

the drawing-room, probably for the last time, for her trunks were packed for a journey, the commencement of which depended merely on the motions of a little steamer not always regular in its returns to Sandpiper, its place of landing, as hers of departure. It might, or it might not, come on the morrow—erratic as it was—but she was prepared to go. Ay, more, to surrender all that life had held to her of the fairest and dearest in that trite preparation.

“It was all over now.” Like Mrs. Thermor, she took refuge in this common phrase from her utter desolation. She who spoke it this time, however, was different from the first who had uttered it, with regard to Mazon Rivers, inasmuch as she was used to self-sacrifice and disappointment, though gifted with rare pertinacity of will and elasticity of spirit, and she could lay this dream to rest—where so many others slumbered along with her early hopes of peace, pride and happiness.

She would seek Mazon Rivers—except to serve and save—no more through life, and the little knitted purse with its mysterious contents would be all left to mock how a great hope had grown and strengthened and perished, a great passion been stranded on the shores of arid desolation and social exile.

Yet despite these resolutions—which had now become almost records of her being (for was she not already putting them into effect by act and deed?)—despite such stern resolves—one who had taken the trouble to observe her closely might have seen an inquiring, wandering look of the large purple eyes toward the door of entrance as guest after guest appeared, for that night, owing to the unexpected advent of friends, high festival was being held at Birk-braes.

The evening wore on as all such evenings do, with much superficial gayety to the few, and real ennui to the many, and, as usual, the graciousness, grace and beauty of Mrs. Thermor were the common theme. To these comments the attentions of the magnificent Major Ravenshaw added fresh enthusiasm, for who so much admired by women as she who bears away the palm of manly admiration?

Exceptions do, indeed, occur to this style of amiable toadyism. There are rancorous toads as well as harmless ones, and among these we are obliged to enumerate our acquaintance, Miss Clara Lindsay, who, while she flattered and frowned, also knew well how to spit out venom on occasions.

“Did you ever see an old fool more desperately and absurdly in love with another than is Major Ravenshaw with our ‘Landlady,’ as Ruffin insists upon calling his mother by way of ridiculing her effort to take on English style, you know, and the airs of a Duchess in her castle, where old Colonel Kavanaugh acts as seneschal? Do observe, Miss Minande! It is as good as a vaudeville. He is absolutely snuffing up the odor of her sandal-wood fan—as a cat snuffs veronica—now that her back is turned (such overt sensuality I never before dreamed of!) Isn’t that by-play fine, though? Do you remark! She certainly has eyes in the back of her head or her dimpled neck—which he looks as if he wanted to kiss or bite—for while she continues to talk with mamma she quietly puts back her hand and withdraws her fan, smiling as she does so, though never turning her head an atom; and how he slyly kisses, old ostrich that he is—with his head hidden in the sand—both hand and fan as



he relinquishes the latter; the truth is, she is afraid he will break it, and he thinks nobody sees him! But she does not flutter an eye-lash, for she does not love him a particle! Now there is self-command!" speaking sarcastically—"almost equal to your own, Mademoiselle—yet I saw you start a little while ago—I did, indeed, when young Marlow entered. It was not he, however, so it passed away," and she laughed.

"I often start, Miss Lindsay. It is one of my bad habits—the remnant perhaps of long suffering."

She spoke so gravely and so gently that the heart of her tormentor misgave her, and she carried her sorry jest no further, but lapsed herself into earnestness; and only partially understanding the interest Mademoiselle Minande felt in Mr. Rivers, she introduced carelessly the subject of his strange immurement and exile from society, too marked even if brief, not to have a meaning.

"I suppose that you believe with the rest, Mademoiselle, that he is engaged with his picture and all that stuff. I don't. I know better; there is something in the wind. See what it wafted me"—deliberately drawing from her pocket two fragments of the note that Major Ravenshaw had torn in pieces and scattered to the breeze.

"Read it, Mademoiselle, and see what you make of it; see how nicely it dovetails," and she laid it together on the knee of her neighbor, who turned her head resolutely from the temptation before her, for, at a glance, she had recognized the handwriting of Mazon Rivers.

"It was not intended for me, Miss Lindsay, and I cannot read it; no, no, indeed. Resume it, I entreat; this with me is a point of honor."

"Not with me, however. There is such a thing as social salvage, and to my share came this treasure-trove, borne on the wings of the night breeze to my very feet as I was straying around the circle in quest of roses for my hair. It is a challenge, Mademoiselle, a part of one; and they fight, no doubt, to-morrow. There, the secret is out!"

"*Helas! que me dites vous, Mademoiselle, a challenge! and from him—from Mazon?*" and she clasped her hands piteously.

They had spoken hitherto in French, but the last words had been uttered in English by Mademoiselle, as if reversing the usual order of things her soul found the greatest utterance in the unaccustomed tongue.

"For mercy's sake, Mademoiselle, be not so easily alarmed," said Miss Lindsay, still speaking in her glib, inelegant French. "Why, it is the best joke in the world. He only asks an apology, which will be offered him when he is just about ready to die of seclusion and starvation; for I had a confidential chat with Juba, aided by the gift of a Spanish dollar, and he disclosed to me the secrets of the prison-house! He is banished by order of the Queen. He is enraged with all the world, and lives upon crackers and cheese that he imports from Sandpiper, merely because Mrs. Thermor refused him formally, and Major Ravenshaw is accepted in his stead. They had a scene in the library, I *know*, from the best authority, on the day of Ruffin's arrival, and have all been at daggers' points ever since. Old Kavanaugh eggs them on, of course, in the hope that the two lovers will make Kilkenny cats of one another. You know the story, I suppose, Mademoiselle. No! what a pity; for, as we

say in English, 'thereto hangs a tale.' Yes, two of them. Well, to proceed—"

"But, Miss Lindsay," interrupting her without apology or any thought of what she had to tell; "why, if all this has occurred, does he not instantly leave Birkbraes? Where is the pride that was once so dear to him? Where is his sense of manhood? Pardon, Mademoiselle; I am deeply concerned for this poor young compatriot of mine. Oh, sorely grieved." And her large eyes filled with tears.

"You take it so very seriously, Mademoiselle. Now to me it is a very funny situation to be shut up in a fortified summer house (he has pistols on his mantel-shelf, Juba tells me, and is whetting up an old sword), waiting for what will never, never come! There will be no fighting, I fancy; I was only jesting about that, but perhaps it would be as well for you to represent to Mr. Rivers the folly of his conduct, and save appearances. I do really like him very much, as I know you do, and when his craziness is over he will thank those who control him now."

"It is a thing in which I cannot interfere, Miss Lindsay," said Mademoiselle Minande, with dignity, collecting herself to speak by a strong effort: "the gentlemen of my land when aggrieved have usually recourse to the duello. It is our knightly code, and there are injuries that cannot otherwise be redressed. If such an insult has been offered to Mr. Rivers, he must as a gentleman resent it after and according to his own ideas of honor, and I know him too well, have known him too long, to believe that he is aggressive or quarrelsome after the manner of the vulgar. His situation here

has been a trying one, fraught with dangerous temptations, and he was never strong, I know this of old, where flattery and affection were the weapons employed. Few men are so, even when better poised and older far than he;" and she glanced unconsciously at Major Ravenshaw, just then employed in fanning Mrs. Thormor vigorously. "If, then, my friend has felt himself compelled to ask satisfaction for injuries either inflicted or imagined, his course must not be impeded, and I, who love him very tenderly—yes, almost as a sister might love a brother—would, if needs be, stand by him on the ground, load his pistol, and time his shot, in the absence of all male friends—unsex myself even and be his second—rather than see him tamely bear rebuke or confront dishonor; and now, no more of this.

"Young girl! it is a cause for tears, not smiles, if rightly understood. A bleeding heart has been crushed to dust and trampled on, and vengeance is demanded for such barbarity."

Her marble cheek was flushed, her purple eyes, dilated and dark with passion, shone like twin stars. Her voice, vibrant and deep with feeling, went to the brain, rather than heart, of her who sat and listened, marvelling as greatly as though a playful fawn had bounded forth a lion, wondering and yet admiring.

"I can't see what there is about that shallow-pated artist to make women love him so," thought Clara Lindsay, after Mademoiselle had gone, swiftly and silently from her side, from the parlor.

"He cares for nothing but himself, I do believe; and yet I know three who would almost die for him!" And the lady sighed.

She was not philosopher enough to know that nature provides for her creatures according to their needs—not their wants.

The sloth has his mournful cry wherewith to soften the malignant intentions of his enemies; the chameleon her slimy tongue which she thrusts forth in quest of the necessary insect food which her sedentary habits would otherwise place beyond her reach; the snake his charm wherewith to wile the otherwise unattractable bird into his very jaws; and the cuttle-fish his inky fluid, darkening the water around him while he makes his languid escape from his foes. But beyond all these are the devices of nature for the support and attractiveness of the inefficient.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Pardon me, I pray you,  
I thought that all things had been savage here!—SHAKESPEARE.

Think not I love him, though I ask for him;  
'Tis but a peevish boy.—SHAKESPEARE.

ON the following morning, and as soon as he had despatched his breakfast and papers (the last on the piazza, in the society of Colonel Kavanaugh), Major Ravenshaw evinced signs of perplexity—first, by clearing his throat repeatedly, and secondly, by wiping his moist forehead with his white cambric handkerchief, of dimensions more suitable to those of a flag of truce than the peaceful accessory of a gentleman's pocket.

Lastly, he crushed his Panama hat down very firmly over his brains, and, placing his trusty sword-cane in rest,

he evidenced a disposition to march in the direction of the pavilion, toward which his face was set steadfastly with a certain desperation in its expression that greatly amused Colonel Kavanaugh, as he sat apparently absorbed in the morning's "Chronicle," fresh from Baltimore.

A slight shaking of the shoulder of that gentleman as of one in the enjoyment of an inward chuckle might have been observed by any person suspecting the truth, but the face was a very grave one that he turned upon Major Ravenshaw, whose question, abruptly put, seemed for the first time to arouse him from the perusal of his carefully conned columns.

"Do you observe any signs of life about the fortress this morning, my dear Colonel, or in other words do you suppose Prince Florizel has arisen from his rosy couch at this early hour? In short, might I venture, do you think, to pop in upon the offended majesty of Bohemia thus unexpectedly, so soon after the morning's meal—which by-the-by he did not deign to honor by his presence—in order to proffer my, ahem! apology?"

"I conceive you safe in your sally, Major Ravenshaw, for I saw him washing his face before breakfast at his chamber window, hand over hand, like a kitten; and I observed later that he emerged from his intrenchment to hang out a towel to dry on a rose-bush! His toilet apparatus is simple enough, it must be confessed; and to do the fellow justice, and it is always a good sign, he is an early riser!"

"I will hazard the step then, if only to relieve the poor fellow from duress vile and restore him to his native element. I go, armed too with a conciliating message from Isabella, whose verbal invitation to join her guests last

night he verbally refused through Juba when he sent back the cashmere shawl he had been painting at—(what else could one say of such portraiture?)

“In my joint capacity of apologist and minister plenipotentiary, my good sir, wish me all success.”

To which request a diffusive answer was the sole answer in the shape of a flourish of the newspaper.

The Major went forth carolling a little song of Garrick’s set to a quaint old air which bubbled up in his fancy at the moment as appropriate perhaps to the situation. I believe, after all, the song was by Colley Cibber :

“You gave me last week a young linnet,  
Shut up in a fine golden cage,  
Yet how sad the poor thing was within it,  
And how he did flutter and rage.

“Then he moped and he pined that his wings were confined,  
And I opened the door of his den,  
When so happy was he that because he was free  
He came to his cage back again.”

As he concluded the last stanza of his stave, he found himself at the door of the pavilion, on which he tapped lightly with the ivory knob of his sword-cane—then, after a somewhat anxious pause, more heavily and emphatically with the same instrument.

In answer to this noisy summons the door was at last opened by a young man—pallid, unshaven and dishevelled—dressed in a gray linen blouse, considerably daubed with paint, and holding in one hand a pallet and brush still filled with color. The inmate of the “fortress” frowned and drew back at the sight of Major Ravenshaw, whose polite salutation he haughtily returned; then, flinging the door wide open, uncoupled with any invitation to enter, he walked quietly back and reseated him-

self before his picture, awaiting, however, with suspended brush, for his visitor to take the initiative.

"I have come, Mr. Rivers," said Major Ravenshaw, leaning on his cane carelessly, and without removing his hat, "to answer in person your note of yesterday by proffering you the apology you require, and which my own sense of what is due from man to man renders necessary to my self-respect.

"In a few words I wish to express my regret for what has occurred between us, Mrs. Thermor's explanation of affairs having put a new face on your interview with herself, and, in short, to offer you my hand."

And as he spoke he divested his hand of its glove, and, advancing towards the artist, stretched forth the member in question suddenly. But before he had measured half the distance of the room, he was aware that Mr. Rivers had risen from his chair and having deliberately laid aside his palette and brush, stood with folded arms before him.

"It is not enough, Major Ravenshaw, that you express your regret for your unqualified insults to me," replied Mazon Rivers, in clear, cold accents, "but Mrs. Thermor, and all others who may be cognizant of your affronts must bear witness to your apology, which for itself and as far as it has reference to our two individual selves, I value as little as I do the idle wind that sweeps across me now."

"Very well, sir; I will go and bring Mrs. Thermor, who will cheerfully obey *my* request to become a witness (the only one required, since discretion, save in one instance, has been strictly observed regarding the scene in the library on account of all concerned), a witness, as I



have said, to the formal apology I see fit to make you on condition that your challenge be withdrawn and that you never open your lips about that lady or her affairs again."

"You misapprehend me, Major Ravenshaw," coldly rejoined Mr. Rivers, though his eyes flashed now, and his frame quivered with excitement, for the last remark of his opponent had galled him, though he did not see fit to notice it in his reply. "You greatly misapprehend me if you suppose that, after the treatment I have received at the hands of Mrs. Thermor, I can or will ever consent to see her face again. No, sir; you must write this apology, so that, when the Atlantic Ocean rolls between us, I may not be maligned. It rests with me to show it through the hands of friends to Mrs. Thermor or others, as I may see fit to do. With you will I make no conditions."

For the space of a moment Major Ravenshaw, still poised on his cane, stood and surveyed his interlocutor with undisguised astonishment, not unmixed with indignation. "Cool, upon my word!" he muttered at last; then, speaking in louder accents, he continued:

"Hear me, Rivers, and try and be reasonable for once. The matter is not one that honorable men should wish to see perpetuated even in memory. A lady is concerned; were it for myself alone, and were I conscious of wrong, I would as lief write as speak an apology before the whole world. But this is different. Colonel Kavanaugh shall be my witness that I apologize, for he alone, beside ourselves, knows of this difficulty. Indeed, I left it somewhat to his decision what I should do. Come, now, be rational and less French. As to your absurd challenge, I decline it on any terms."

"Then I pronounce you a coward, and in spite of your gray hairs, shall proceed to chastise you wherever we shall meet outside of these immediate premises. I give you fair warning, old man. I shall wait for you down at Sandpiper."

"Boy, are you mad?" foamed forth the Major, and he shook his cane in the air. "As to my gray hairs, you curled barber's block, I would not give them for every scented lock that grows upon your Bohemian addled pate, and you have found to your cost how differently they are estimated elsewhere," he added, with a sneer.

"Drop your cane, sir, and your insults, or I will not answer for what I may do," ground Mazeron Rivers, stolidly, beneath his close-set teeth.

"No, sir—at no bidding of yours;" and Major Ravenshaw advanced fiercely toward the artist, who stood confronting him, with his back against his easel, near the chimney corner.

"One step nearer and your life shall answer for your insolence," exclaimed Rivers, now excited beyond the powers of endurance; and reaching back his hand he took from the mantle one of a pair of pistols that lay there in readiness, probably for practice, for the expected duello, and held it cocked before him. As the scarlet rag waved by the tozados exasperates the already irate bull, so seemed the sight of the small silver-mounted Deringer to inflame the angry Major Ravenshaw to madness.

Drawing his trusty sword-blade from its scabbard, and hurling the latter to the floor, while with his disengaged hand he flung his glove in the artist's face, he leaped

half across the intervening space, his hat falling off behind him as he advanced with his face inflamed by passion, and brandishing his sword not three feet from the breast of his antagonist.

Mazon Rivers fired, but without taking deliberate aim, and missed his careless mark. Then, while in the act of presenting the second pistol more designedly, he felt himself pierced by the sword of his opponent, and wounded to the life.

The drooping hand sent the ball of the second pistol through the floor instead of the heart it was intended for, and a moment later Rivers had fallen back bathed in blood, leaving the crimsoned blade in the hand of its master, who had instantly withdrawn it from the wound with an instinct of humanity, perhaps a mistaken one.

"He is dead!" groaned Major Ravenshaw, "and I have killed him. Put me under arrest."

These words were addressed to the person who almost immediately after the catastrophe entered the door of the pavilion, spectacles on nose, and newspaper in hand, having heard the firing from his safe position on the piazza, and being apparently in his own person as far as possible removed from the popular idea of an officer of justice.

Everything was explained by the condition of the bleeding young artist and the words that Major Ravenshaw had uttered.

Tacit measures were about to be adopted by the two to convey the unhappy youth to his bed in the adjoining room, when again the door opened (for Colonel Kavanaugh, even in that moment of urgency, had closed it

behind him with a presence of mind for which he was remarkable), and very quietly, as the playwrights say—to them—entered Mademoiselle.

Her eye embraced the situation in one sweep of its purple iris, and the mind as well conceived the cause of the disaster, somewhat assisted by what she had unwillingly listened to from Miss Lindsay the night before.

She, too, had heard the firing from her chamber window, where she sat engaged with a book, and had crossed the garden, always deserted at that hour by the laborers, without meeting any one who might explain its cause, too well surmised by her own sinking heart.

How quickly she must have come, and under what pressure of anxiety, her heaving bosom, her pale and anxious countenance clearly indicated.

She had knocked lightly, and receiving no answer, yet hearing within the confused sound of voices, had entered unbidden, and without stopping to ask a question, had gone straight to the bleeding form which the two gentlemen were just beginning to lift.

At a signal from her hand they desisted in their effort; and kneeling down by the side of the man she had so loved and pitied, she tore open the garments that covered his heart, and calmly examined what seemed to every one a death wound—staunching the blood with her handkerchief as she did so, and feeling about the region of the heart for some evidence of vitality.

“Make a compress, Colonel Kavanaugh; give him brandy; send for a surgeon,” she said in a cold, mechanical voice, that seemed another’s, so changed was it from her own quick, vibrant tones; and her commands

were promptly obeyed by the bewildered men around her.

Nor until the arrival of Dr. Mandamus—three hours later—did she suffer Mazon to be touched or herself to leave his side.

Sitting beside him on the ground, she made a continued pressure upon the wound that effectually staunched the blood; and when he came she had the satisfaction of hearing from the lips of the physician that she had so far saved the life dearer than her own.

Yet nothing she said or did was calculated to betray emotion to unobservant eyes. It was only from the fixed pallor of her face and its locked expression that this could be surmised, and at a time of such anxiety none paused to mark the look that froze her lineaments to marble.

It was not until after Mazon had been surrendered to the hands of the surgeon and his assistant, and that she found herself alone in the atelier (for his bed, to which they had at last removed him, was in the small chamber that adjoined it) that she gave way to one brief, silent, passionate burst of tears, followed by earnest supplications to the Almighty Father in behalf of him she solely loved.

She was again composed and waiting to be summoned—for she had promised Dr. Mandamus to watch his patient until he should return in the afternoon—when she was aware of the presence of Major Ravenshaw by her chair.

“This is a wretched business, my dear young lady,” he said, with a bitter groan, and tears burst from his manly eyes, honest, if no more. “A wretched business; but I

thank God it is no worse. Don't you, Mademoiselle?" eagerly.

A silent shake of the head—a cold, sad smile—were her only answers. But she turned away from him, with a reflection she could not hide.

"It could scarcely have been worse," she thought.

"I am very sorry, Mademoiselle; I am, upon my word. If I can do anything, command me. I shall not leave here, of course, until the matter is decided—of life and death, I mean. But, in the interval, I want to warn you, as does Colonel Kavanaugh, to communicate nothing of what has occurred to Mrs. Thermor. Her feelings must be spared, at any sacrifice, you know. It is very important that she should remain ignorant of the exact situation of affairs, or of the condition of Mr. Rivers. Promise me this, Mademoiselle."

"I promise you." And again the pallid lips closed with their look of strong woe, so fixed and calm that it deceived the superficial observer before her into a conviction of her hardness or her indifference.

"Kavanaugh is all at sea about this woman and her love for Rivers," he thought. "Why no hired hospital nurse could be colder or more entirely collected. I expected a storm of reproaches when I entered, but resolved to face them in the hope of saving Isabella's feelings. This repose is inconceivable."

"How do you feel now, my dear fellow?" asked Dr. Mandamus of his patient when he returned in the afternoon, having left Mademoiselle in charge of the wounded man, together with his assistant, and delighted to find him lying with open eyes and indications of returned consciousness.

The answer made was fluent enough, however discouraging, evidencing, as it did, considerable delirium.

"Feel? Oh, very well indeed—never better—a little giddy, that is all. I wish to heaven it could last forever, though! but the horses have been stopped."

And he smiled drearily and waved his hand.

"Do you know what he refers to, Mademoiselle?" asked the physician, slightly elevating his dark eyebrows.

"A recent drive, I believe, Monsieur. There is no doubt much method in his madness," and she sighed.

"Well, I am glad to hear that; it is always some comfort to know there is a foundation even for delirium. Was he hurt, that you know of, during that drive?"

"Not physically, Monsieur, I am quite sure. But, alas! he raves again; he must be still."

"The prisoner at the bar ought to be discharged at once, my lord!" shouted Rivers. "He did it in self-defence. The man shot at him twice. I witnessed the whole transaction. It was barbarous!"

A few drops from a vial in the saddle-bags of Dr. Mandamus soon sent poor Mazon to sleep for some hours; but the recurrence of his delirium became one of the most distressing features of a long and dangerous illness that resulted, alas!—but let us not anticipate.

Mademoiselle has still the work before her, and whether successful or unsuccessful remains to be tested. In the meantime youth and disease have got to wage wild war over that flickering, feeble flame of life which one rude blast might extinguish, and which the young, faithful watcher so tenderly guards and cherishes.

"Is that young French girl, who seems so intelligent

and devoted both—by the way, a pretty creature, too—a relation of the wounded young man?” asked the physician, on the third day of his attendance, of Major Ravenshaw, who, perfectly wretched, vibrated between Mrs. Thermor and the atelier; soothing the fears of the one—who had of course heard something of an *accident*—and yet never permitted to enter the presence of the other, lest excitement at seeing his enemy should injure the patient.

“No, I believe not,” was the rejoinder. “Only a countrywoman—some think attached to him—but I cannot believe *that* for one; she is too calm. Why, but for her presence of mind all would have gone wrong at first, as you said yourself, doctor. Now, when a woman is in love, you know—”

“She is transfigured!” interrupted the physician. “My dear sir, I have seen such evidence of self-abnegation, calmness, and endurance on the part of wives and sweethearts that the martyrdom of old would never have approached them.”

“Well, I have the clue now, and I could ask no better assistant than such a sentiment. If there is a spark of life left in the poor young fellow, believe me, she will blow it up to flame. But I confess the prospect seems gloomy. Yet cheer up, Major Ravenshaw. I have pulled through worse cases before now, with careful nursing like hers.”

“I would give half I possess to see him well again,” said Major Ravenshaw, sadly; “yet if it were to do over I suppose I should act in the same manner. When my head begins to whirl, doctor, I always go off the handle; such is my beggarly nature. And the truth is, I am



only fit to live among the Seminoles, who are never aggravating or exacting or uncourteous."

"You give them a high character for refinement, Major Ravenshaw. I have never before heard of Indian deportment."

"Yes, sir, their manners are good and their breeding also, if they are thieves and assassins; but foreign airs I could never grow accustomed to; and above all a Frenchman, with his vulgar ways, could I never abide! I have too much cavalier blood in my veins, sir, for that."

"I confess I am interested in the young man, Frenchman or not," said Dr. Mandamus; "and I, whose vocation it is to heal, could never see how men could be fond of destroying one another. No offence, Major; your trade is different, that is all. This is a noble young life, and we must try to save it. Another nurse must be procured, however. My assistant can no longer devote himself wholly to this case without injustice to others, and this poor young lady will very soon break down without manly aid. Now, whom could you recommend?"

"Juba, and Coriander, and Duff, and Liberty are all efficient aids, doctor."

"Negroes all! Would you consign this sweet young person to such society? We are talking of an assistant for you, Mademoiselle, as Mr. Jenkins must leave on account of his medical engagements," continued Dr. Mandamus, elevating his voice a little, as those who speak only one tongue are apt to do who accost foreigners in their vernacular, as Mademoiselle Minande glided into the chamber.

"I have just a note, Monsieur, from M. de Rochambeau, who has, I hear, arrived at de village Sandpipaire

to accompany me back to my friends. I cannot think to go until my compatriot is better or much worse, and in de meantime he will come, if you object not, to my relief. He is one of de most experienced of all old men to nurse, and has walked hospitals in war time. Shall he come?"

All this was said slowly, and with a marked foreign accent, yet clearly and intelligibly, and the doctor thought it the sweetest voice he had ever heard, and he caught eagerly at the aid so near at hand and so opportune.

It was arranged between them that on his return late that evening Dr. Mandamus should bring with him Monsieur de Rochambeau instead of Jenkins.

A little note consisting of one line was handed to him open by Mademoiselle, requesting that he would transfer it to the old Frenchman to make all secure. The words of the note were simply these: "*Venez sans hesitation avec Monsieur le Medecin nous avons besoin de vous. Il est malade.*"

After the coming of M. Rochambeau Mademoiselle held day watch, and gave to him that of the night, commencing at twelve o'clock, when the patient usually began to quiet down under the influence of an opiate.

The morning's light found her at his pillow again, and M. Rochambeau—a silent, old, white-haired man, who seldom spoke—slumbered all day on a couch in the atelier; or, if he listed, returned to Sandpiper and his lodgings in that hamlet.

Never was wounded patient so quietly nursed, or with so little trouble to a family. But, to Mrs. Thermor's credit, be it said, that she knew not the extent of the injury—or even its precise nature—until the culmination of events necessarily revealed them.

She was persuaded by Major Ravenshaw, abetted by Colonel Kavanaugh, that she could not with any propriety enter the room of the sick man after what had occurred, and that all she ought to do was done, when, once a day, she went on the arm of one of those colluding worthies to inquire at the door concerning him.

Dr. Mandamus, also, had his cue, and refused her satisfaction. Juba and Rena, too, were sternly admonished that, for their own security and welfare, discretion had better be observed concerning the condition of Mr. Rivers, and the cause of his sufferings—well known to both.

“Fencing with foils, he had been accidentally wounded,” she had been told, and as Mademoiselle, with her odious foreign brass, had seen fit to establish herself by his pillow, she was certainly not going to intrude or seek for details.

Genie had gone to Baltimore with Ruffin and Gertrude Lindsay on a brief visit—gone, too, the very day of the occurrence that had resulted in poor Mazon’s discomfiture, and thus all sources of usual and intimate communication were cut off from the mistress of Birkbraes, whose guests, with one accord, in her presence ignored the subject of Mr. Rivers, for by this time her engagement to Major Ravenshaw was understood.

Despite the precautions observed and her own determination to make neither private inquiry nor public remark about her wounded guest, some inkling of the truth began to find its way to the mind of Mrs. Thermor.

All that she possessed would she have freely given (so felt she at the last of a struggle that had continued through several woful days and sleepless nights, which

told on her appearance signally) to take the place of Mademoiselle but for one revolution of the earth, by the side of him she adored.

But something more than mere propriety was now at stake, and she felt instinctively that the watchful eyes of her whole household were fixed upon her; above all those of the argus-orbed seneschal of her castle, and her guest Miss Lindsay, the last, if truth be told, dying for an opportunity of making a revelation.

Rena waited dumbly, hoping to be questioned, in which case she had resolved, in defiance of all the world, to tell her mistress the whole truth; but so far Rena had waited in vain, for even to her attached servant Mrs. Thermor, the betrothed of Major Ravenshaw, feared to betray the depth of her interest and its consequent emotion by interrogatories.

As to Dr. Mandamus, he usually spoke to women in oracles, which only the skilful could properly interpret, and the style of communication he had always found particularly successful in calming apprehension without the utterance of positive falsehood.

Accordingly, when on the 5th of June—a day that seemed the crisis of poor Mazon's condition—she waylaid the doctor in the shrubbery, and, affecting as much indifference as possible, asked him about his patient and the prospect of his recovery, Mrs. Thermor at first could obtain no definite reply, and was staggered by the terrific string of technicalities, each word harder than the last, properly employed to disguise the truth and evade her questions.

“Doctor,” she said at last, when he was almost out of breath with his own skilful fencing, and when she saw

signs of his suddenly succumbing, and departure, his usual mode of cutting a social gordian knot when all others failed him.

"Doctor," and she placed her soft, wax-like hand upon his arm, which, suddenly closing upon that burly member with unexpected strength, left him absolutely at her mercy, had not even her large, blue eyes been fixed upon his face too earnestly to permit him to escape their spell.

"Dr. Mandamus, what have I done to be treated like a child in my own house, and by the friend and physician my poor husband so loved and honored?" Here tears gushed over her fair, full cheeks, and her mouth trembled like a rose blown about by the breeze for a moment or two; and the lace-trimmed handkerchief was applied to her eyes, which were soon again dry and in good order, and once more fixed beseechingly on the doctor's face.

"I am so hurt that I should have been the last person to be consulted in my own house, or to be informed of the true condition of one of its inmates—about whom, to tell you the truth, I feel an immense responsibility.

"The Countess Cluche, you know, my own dear cousin by courtesy—niece, though nearly my own age, by my mother's side—sent him here, and what will she think of me (sobbing) when he returns to France and (sobbing) like all those foreigners (sobs) exaggerates, perhaps, the neglect he really has received at my hands? All your fault, doctor, if truth be told!"

"And do you think him capable of this?" asked Dr. Mandamus a little sternly. "If so, I wonder that

you should care at all what report he makes, also do I wonder much that your niece or cousin—if he be such a man—should have sent him hither.”

Without taking the least notice of this diversion on the part of the shrewd Mandamus, who was somewhat impatiently beating a rose-bush to pieces with his riding-whip, she went on fluently, and not without a certain pathos which riveted his attention :

“But if he should die! Oh, doctor, if he should perish on my hands, without warning to me of his desperate state—he so young—so gifted—so dear to many hearts,” and she relaxed her grasp upon the doctor’s arm, unwittingly to clasp her long, white fingers convulsively together. “What—what would others think? and what would be my agony never to have ministered to him—under my own roof, too? never to have addressed to him one kind word, one serious or tender inquiry, even—even about the welfare of his immortal soul? Oh, doctor, think of this, and speak to me the truth—as to one strong to bear it, eager to hear it, wretched because of this prolonged delusion!

“It is not your nature, I know, to be crafty and cruel, and deceitful; but as you love the truth, so speak it to me now, I charge you!” And again she grasped him. “See, I await your verdict.”

“What is it you wish to know, Mrs. Thermor?” asked the doctor, a little huskily, clearing his throat as he always did when affected and impressed beyond himself, with the conviction that she had a right, superior to that of any other, to a straightforward answer. She who represented Birk-braes—though a woman!

“Whether he will live or die,” and her clasped hands

fell straight before her, as in low, eager tones, she made this inquiry.

"That rests with God, Mrs. Thermor."

"Your opinion! That is what I ask."

"I can scarcely form a definite one yet. This is a crisis, he is very ill, ahem! yet he has on his side two powerful allies, youth and a sound constitution. He has never been a dissipated man. He may recover!"

"May—and is this all the consolation you have to offer me," she cried, "after these ten days of subterfuge on your part—and wretched anxiety on mine? Take back your miserable '*may*.' Doctor, he *must*, he *shall* live! Devote all your energies to him, all your science, all your time, and look to me for your remuneration, whatever amount you may choose to make it. Save him and take half my estate if you will, for my very being is bound up in this young man's life."

"My dear, dear lady," replied Dr. Mandamus, "do you suppose I need any incentive like this to urge me to the performance of my duty? Your anxiety about Major Ravenshaw, however, carries you too far, natural as it is under the circumstances, for I know what your feelings must have been to see one guest work such mischief to another; one, too, that you feel such vital interest in; as—as Colonel Kavanaugh assures me has been awakened in your breast by the gallant Ravenshaw. I hope I have betrayed no secret," seeing her frightened and offended face; "but the fact is I am always putting my foot in it."

"Go on, Dr. Mandamus; when did the duel occur? I suppose there was one."

"No, merely a rencounter; and it is certain that

Ravenshaw acted on the defensive, though he blamed himself very severely. I did not mean to allude to it, however, nor to the whispered engagement. It was your agitation that threw me off my guard."

So saying he was gone, after having shed much light on a hitherto mysterious subject; for until this moment (strangely enough) Mrs. Thermor had not, as we know, connected Major Ravenshaw at all with the bodily injuries under which she had learned Rivers was suffering.

Yet a hundred times had he been on the point of revealing to her the whole affair—as due to himself as well as to her in the character of hostess, if not of affianced wife—and as often had Colonel Kavanaugh, who kept him pretty constantly in sight, and just now under his thumb, interfered with remonstrances and representations that controlled him to silence.

"She will be sure to expose everything if she hears of his danger," thought the crafty old seneschal, who, after all, had her good at heart and that of her children as well as his own. "We shall have her in hysterics, calling her dear painter by a thousand tender names; and, now that her face is set, like a flint, marriage-wise, she had better take Ravenshaw than any other man who will ever be mad enough to propose to marry her. Ten to one the result of such knowledge would be a reconciliation with that young hair-brained puppy—should he recover—and, of course, in any case there would be an end to her engagement with Ravenshaw.

"No, no; let the thing culminate without a scene. When she hears he is dead—if it comes to that—her own good sense will show her the necessity of self-control.



"My own idea would be to bury him without letting her know a word about it.

"People always calm down after a funeral. Isabella has astonished me greatly, I confess, by her absurd passion for this stripling, and it will take good management to steer her past the shoals yet. Fortunately a trusty pilot has his hand upon the helm of the gallant brig," and he smiled self-complacently.

It need not be said that not one word of this kind was spoken to Major Ravenshaw in order to dissuade him from making Mrs. Thermor a party in his grief about Rivers, which waxed sorer every day and harder to restrain.

When the thing first occurred he had put a good face on the matter, and seemed disposed to justify himself. But of late nothing could be more abject than his sorrow, or more bitter than his self-reproach, which took away strength and appetite.

Mrs. Thermor, absorbed with her own feelings, had observed him but slightly; but after Dr. Mandamus' revelation, and when her own determination had been promptly made, she saw with a grim satisfaction the sufferings of her devoted Major—saw, and pretended not to see, as it was her plan to do—for she did not choose that any one should be cognizant of her insight into what was going on in the minds of others.

The breakfast was a very mournful one that morning at Birk-braes. Even Clara Lindsay had been evidently crying. "Old Kavanaugh" was cross and grave and ate less than usual, and Major Ravenshaw, on the plea of headache, declined all but a cup of coffee, and sat with his brow covered by his slender, sinewy, brown hands

during most of the time devoted to the repast. Mrs. Thermor alone was cheerful.

She had met Dr. Mandamus in the shrubbery at seven o'clock, and breakfast was served at nine; yet in that short interval she had managed to regain entire external composure.

There is nothing like a fresh and firm resolve to steady the powers of nerve and brain and teach patience and endurance to the expectant heart. This had she formed and found.

A bitter burst of grief had relieved her almost breaking heart when she took refuge in her chamber after Dr. Mandamus' departure. In Genie's absence she felt safe from intrusion, yet when she rang her bell for Rena she had made up her mind to a confederacy.

It is scarcely worth the time to record the conversation between mistress and maid on this occasion, in which so much was revealed and resolved, or even to state the determination it led to on the part of the former, which will be made plain later and in due time.

Cold water and cold cream, rice powder and a touch of rouge and rose water removed all external traces of the mental conflict through which Mrs. Thermor had passed, and, determined as she was to preserve her secret from prying eyes, she looked like Aurora at the breakfast board.

Colonel Kavanaugh had impressed upon Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay and Miss Constance the necessity of sparing Mrs. Thermor's feelings as much as possible with regard to the condition of Mr. Rivers—which it was perfectly understood by this time was a desperate one,

and was the consequence of a skirmish—some said a duel—with Major Ravenshaw.

The last report had been secretly circulated by Miss Clara Lindsay, who, in support of her statement, exhibited one of the fragments of the challenge the wind had wafted her—"flotsam and jetsam," as she called it—taking good care to conceal the portion which alluded to Mrs. Thermor.

She had also industriously promulgated her discovery of an engagement between her hostess and Major Ravenshaw, having at last quite despaired of her meditated conquest of that gentleman.

She thereafter amused herself unmercifully at his expense, after the fashion of such disappointed coquettes.

It was perfectly understood by all but Clara Lindsay, that, owing to her interest in Major Ravenshaw *alone*, Mrs. Thermor must be kept in ignorance of the difficulty that had taken place, and consequent danger of poor young Rivers. Bound to discretion by the injunctions of her mother, the commands of her father, she had hitherto kept herself within assigned limits; but on the morning in question, when gloom sat on every brow save that of the hostess, radiant as Hesperus, the occasion was too tempting to be neglected to launch a dart at her happy and unconscious rival.

She waited patiently until all had left the table except Colonel Kavanaugh and Mrs. Thermor, who usually sat last of all, directions for the day being always given severally to John and Coriander by her, when the guests had departed. Then drawing quietly to the side of her hostess, who sat almost concealed by the bright array of silver vases before her, she uttered a piteous sigh and shook

her fair head drearily, glancing furtively as she did so in the direction of the ever vigilant Colonel Kavanaugh.

"It is coming now," thought Mrs. Thermor. "Thank heaven I am prepared for her!" And come it did.

"I thought, dear Mrs. Thermor," murmured her mournful companion, "from the expression of your countenance latterly, its anxiety and pallor, that you knew of Mr. Rivers' condition, so dreadful, you know, under the circumstances; a stranger in your gate and all that sort of thing, and forbore all comment out of consideration for your feelings, but I begin to think I must be mistaken. You look so radiant to-day that I suppose you have merely been indisposed of late, but I grieve to say a severe blow is in store for you."

"What can you mean, Clara?" with well-feigned surprise; "do hasten to explain."

"How I wish he would go, then I could tell you everything; and you really ought to know, but he will not, for I hear him calling for a hot snipe and another crab, dreadful old cannibal that he is."

"Clara, he will hear you."

"I do not care, I wish he would, despotic old creature. Why, every one can see that you cannot call your soul your own for him."

"Suppose we change the subject. What have you to communicate? If it is about Mr. Rivers, as I imagine, I do know everything. Dr. Mandamus has just told me his situation, and I am very sorry indeed. Juba, a little more boiling water for Miss Lindsay's tea."

For a moment Clara Lindsay stared resolutely and incredulously in Mrs. Thermor's face, not a whit less astonished than she appeared to be. Why, the woman's

cheek had not even blanched, nor her lips, and it was not her custom to rouge, every one knew, either the one or the other, with that radiant natural color unmistakably her own!

People rarely do such things piecemeal or occasionally (as Mrs. Thermor we know did), and are judged sweepingly, and not from solitary instances, by those who pretend to penetrate all such secrets.

At that moment a summons arrived, not to be disregarded, from Major Ravenshaw, who wished to entreat Mrs. Thermor for a little of her aromatic vinegar to soothe his head; but who in reality had been telegraphed by "old Kavanaugh," who saw him on the piazza, to observe what was going on, and tear his beloved from such dangerous proximity on any possible pretext without delay.

In a contemplative spirit of mingled disappointment and conjecture, Clara Lindsay sat balancing her tiny gold egg-spoon on the edge of the cup of hot tea she had just partaken of, as an excuse for her move to the end of the table, when she was somewhat startled by the sharp, sarcastic tones of Colonel Kavanaugh's voice, as he addressed to her a brief reproof.

"Well, I hope you have made a fair beginning in your peculiar line of business on this fine June morning, Miss Clara Lindsay, and that you will go through the remainder of the twenty-four hours much strengthened and refreshed in consequence," and he bowed sardonically.

"I do not comprehend you, sir, I confess," she answered coolly; "but you probably have snipe or crab on the brain."

"I have never yet expected a viper to lay aside its venom

on my account," said the irascible old Colonel, crimsoning with rage, "but I make a point of scotching such reptiles whenever I perceive them ready to attack either myself or those near to me, and I shall not make an exception now."

"You speak in apologue, wise Confucius. I have thought for some time your brain was in labor with an idea. Behold the wonderful result! The mountain has brought forth a mouse or a crab. Which is it?"

Hereupon Juba and Coriander giggled suddenly, not knowing why themselves, and were instantly once more as solemn as bumble-bees under the severe eye of the master.

The Colonel scowled fearfully around, and then concentrated his gleaming pupils once more on the careless young person, who still sat balancing her spoon as nicely as a Chinese juggler could have done on the edge of her cup.

Had there been a ray of wit in her utterance, or had not the negroes sniggered outright, he might have been amused or scornful. As it was, he waxed wroth apace. His dignity had been assaulted, and this was a matter he could never lightly look upon.

"There will be no 'feast of roses' here this year, that is plain, Colonel Kavanaugh," said Miss Lindsay, after a few moments of silence, during which she had determined to mend matters, if possible, and conciliate the old dragon who so zealously guarded his golden fruit.

To this remark no reply was vouchsafed, but nothing daunted, the saucy young girl went on defiant, in spite of her sad and stricken heart—for she, too, mourned for Mazon—*and as one without hope, in any case.*

"I thought it my duty—knowing that Genie had gone to Baltimore to order an expensive dress, and supper and flowers, and Chinese lamps, and all sorts of adornments for the occasion, with Aunt Constance as her adviser, for Mrs. Thermor's festival—to let her know that all this preparation would be wasted. There is still time to countermand the orders. It would be positively indecent to dance on the poor young Frenchman's grave—killed, too, slaughtered, I may say—as he has been by that old Seminole brave of yours and hers. I should be sorry she should make herself a subject of unkind remark."

"As you have already made her!" said the implacable officer, darting fierce and angry glances at his tranquil enemy who was at this time selecting the best flowers from a vase that had been in the centre of the table, for a bouquet, which Juba, at her behest, had placed before her.

The dart went home this time, and Miss Lindsay in turn was exasperated; but she said with tolerable coolness, though reddening visibly:

"Accusations unsupported by proof amount to nothing, we all know. Were I a man I should hold you to account, though, for that speech were you the venerable Bede himself."

"And as you are a woman," scoffed the Colonel, "you can do nothing but—"

"Retire!" she interrupted promptly, and she arose, flowers in hand, adding, in the most provoking manner, as she passed his chair and bowed on her way to the portico, "I leave you to the conflict, not of conscience and good-breeding, for these are strangers to you, I imagine,

but to that fearful intestine strife—forgive the pun—waged between undigested crabs and crude, belligerent snipe, so common to your crabbed organization. Inform me, if you please, at our next meeting, which of the insurgents conquered.”

As she vanished she kissed her hand airily, and laughed her little tinkling, exasperating laugh.

“I wish I was thirty-five,” said the old Colonel, after the subsidence of a silent chuckle, indulged in in spite of himself, in the absence of all witnesses; “I should fall in love with her, court her forthwith, marry her, of course, and keep her in perfect subjection all the rest of her days. It is worth while to subject a limb like that—some sport! witty and wicked both, and wise besides. Now, I suppose, she will go straight to Isabella, repeat the whole scene between us, and tell all she left untold. I could not hear what she was saying, owing to this confounded thickness of hearing, which is growing on me of late.

“Mem.—Must consult Mandamus about it when he comes again,” and he drew forth a note-book and jotted down his intention; “but after all my pains, I do hope earnestly that she will let the matter alone, especially as she is as deep in as any of them. A-hem! Confound that girl! how she governs herself, though; how much more backbone she has than poor Isabella, soft as mush, yet stubborn, too, when she takes the bit in her teeth!

“That woman,” picking his teeth vehemently, “has given me more trouble in the last two years than ever I had in the whole course of my life before, and upon my honor I am glad to be relieved”—with a deep drawn sigh.



"Genie has more sense and more pluck and will rein easier; but the success of that young Rivers is astonishing!

"As to poor Ravenshaw I pity him. His part will be no sinecure. But some men never profit by experience. Isabella Thermor will be a widow again before five years, and then, and then, I hope she may remain so!"

He rose from the table vehemently; scowling at Coriander as he passed, who contented himself with drawing back his chair respectfully; bowing low, and picking up the napkin he threw down disdainfully. The mournful and penitent expression of his varlet's face affected the irate Major, who tossed him a half dollar, upon which condescension Juba sprang forward eagerly to hold back the door for the egress of the "autocrat of the breakfast table." No shining liberty cap and spread eagle rewarded his disinterested attentions, however, on this occasion, and he returned to clear off the table in no very pleasant mood. "Take dem bones away, boy," he said scornfully to Coriander. "Dat's all de ole cormorant ebber lebes for me."

## CHAPTER X.

Then fare thee well! I'd rather make  
My home upon some icy lake  
When thawing suns begin to shine  
Than trust to love as false as thine.—MOORE.

IT was midnight when, muffled in a long, black silk cloak, with veil thrown over her white cambric gown and sunny hair, so as to conceal both as effectually as ever did friar's cowl, and followed by Rena disguised in a large gray shawl so as to look rather like a gigantic night-moth than merry Christian handmaid, Mrs. Thermor took her way through the dense shrubbery at the rear of the mansion, to seek by a circuitous path the pavilion at the edge of the garden.

The windows of Colonel Kavanaugh had been carefully investigated before the twain had set out on this secret expedition and those (by a rigid scrutiny) of Major Ravenshaw ascertained to be in utter darkness, for, unlike his brother officer, he employed no taper to shed light upon his dreams.

The very precautions she was taking made it all the more indispensable to Mrs. Thermor that her midnight sally should not be detected, for these would of course react on her in the shape of undue suspicion, and even ridicule, the last more insufferable than the first in her opinion.

"You are quite sure, Rena," whispered her mistress, before arriving at the pavilion, "that Mademoiselle has gone home, and that Monsieur (the old Frenchman, I mean) has the watch?"

"Yes, mistress, I seed Miss Minode when she crossed the garden half an hour ago, and I watched her clean to de ell door, caze, after what you said—"

"Very well! that is sufficient. I do not mind the old man at all. He will never know who I am in this disguise, and, besides that, the piece of gold will set all right, if I know aught of human nature. Have you got it safely, Rena?"

"Yes, mistress, I'se got it clinched fast in de hollow of my hand—a big double-eagle piece—twiste too much for de occasion, I'se thinking," murmuring the last words inaudibly to Mrs. Thermor.

"Be sure you recollect the signal—you are to press your finger on your lip, point to me, and hand him the money silently; after I go in. He cannot understand a word of English, but signs are the universal language."

"La, mistress, I thought every one livin' could understand plain English even if dey could not speak it; even de poll parrots kin do dat."

"Be quiet, Rena; we are nearly there, and my voice must not be recognized outside. Now, look in cautiously and tell me who and what you see; the door stands open."

"Nobody, not a soul, mistress, an' de old man fast asleep in de atelier beyond; I can see him from here, for all de world like a dead corpse, stretched on de couch, just opposite de door."

"What a careless, sleepy-headed old person! Are you sure Juba is in the thicket to warn me of any approach? Did you see him as we passed?"

"Yes, mistress, I seed his white eyes rollin', an' he turned de dark lantern, just so as to 'veal where he was

squattin' down, and he pulled my shawl for a sign. Dat was what made me look so sharp, he, he, he!" suppressing a giggle, for not all the mystery that surrounded it could make this midnight raid other than ludicrous in the extreme to Mrs. Thermor's confederates.

"Great heaven, girl, what *do* you find to laugh at? Be silent and watchful. There, sit down near the door-steps, behind the laburnum tree; and be sure to give me timely warning if any one should come at all near the pavilion. I can easily escape in such case—through the other door."

The bed-room in which the wounded man was lying was connected, as we know, on one hand with the atelier, and as we do not know, on the other side with the garden by means of a small door shaded by honey-suckle trellis, and joined to the sward by the aid of three flat stone steps, which Mrs. Thermor now hastily ascended.

Small as the apartment was, it possessed two windows opposite to one another for draught, as well as two doors for egress, as we have seen; and to gain the advantage of every breath of air in the late unusually sultry weather the bedstead of the invalid had been drawn out from the wall, and so partially from beneath the shadow of its tent-like drapery.

To-night, however, the wind was fresh and cool, and some considerate hand had extended one of the trailing curtains so as to exclude the air from the window next the bed, that admitted the bay breeze, and to protect as well as the patient the taper, that burned dimly in the corner, from its effects.

He lay quite still—the sufferer she had come to visit—and apparently asleep; but this Isabella soon found

he was not, for bending above him and lightly touching his brow with her gentle fingers, Mrs. Thermor heard him murmur, "Give me some ice, Marie; it is all I want."

She gave him (this impromptu nurse of his) a morsel of the precious article he craved from the crystal bowl beside the bed, and, so revived, he opened his eyes and looked upon her face with the unmistakable glance of instant recognition, but no sounds left his parched and parted lips.

"Say that you know me, Mazon. Call me by my name," she murmured low. "Tell me that you forgive me—that you love me still."

"Know you, Madame? Yes, I have cause to know you—to remember you—to love you, and forgive you!" and he laughed—laughed so bitterly that, low as was the sound of that savage laughter, it made her blood creep coldly through her veins.

"Then you hate me, Mazon? Oh, God, how very dreadful this is! I, who have so suffered, wept, trembled, and prayed for you; who love you so entirely!" and her voice was choked with tears.

"Such love!" he scoffed. "It was the love of the serpent for the bird. You charmed him, caught him, slew him. Madame, you are equal to Queen Laban, in the fairy tale; or Lucretia Borgia; or Mary Queen of Scots. She, too, was fair, you know; yet how she treated Chattelard!"

"Rivers, you rave. Look at me steadfastly. I have come to comfort you—if love of mine can still do this—to save you; to entreat you to live, if only for my sake!"

And she clasped his burning hand, bedewing it with her tears, at the same time covering it with kisses.

But he tore it from her moodily, and turning his head on the pillow with a painful effort, averted his eyes from her face.

"Go," he said. "The bride of Major Ravenshaw should not condescend. She can be nothing to me, nor I to her, never again."

"Mazon! darling! I am not yet his bride; never will be if you wish it otherwise; for it is you only that I have ever truly loved since I became a widow—you alone. It is easy to break such chains as bind me to Major Ravenshaw; easy. And I would sacrifice life itself to see you recover. See! I give you my promise and my hand. I will be your wife. Your gods shall be my gods and your people my people. Only live, my Mazon!"

She laid her brow upon the edge of the mattress and threw her arms across him, borne away impetuously by the torrent of her resistless grief and love, as she had never thought to be again.

The fevered head, despoiled of its chief glory now, for all its silken ringlets had been shorn away ruthlessly by the order of Dr. Mandamus, again was turned slowly and painfully upon its pillow, and with his small remaining strength the sick man put away the arms thrown lightly over him, and fixed his eyes on the tear-stained face, now lifted again before him, with a sad surprise and eager look of inquiry.

"Can it be possible," she thought, "that the spell is broken?"

"Madame," he said, in louder accents than he had yet

employed, for his was now the fictitious strength of fever, rapidly increasing under the excitement of this interview.

"Madame, until you can bring me back my little Green Domino, with her angel voice and smile, her flowers of Paradise, I shall have done with love. And, woman, her kiss still lingers on my brow, cool and chaste as that of a pitying saint; her gentle fingers left no sting behind; but the fires of an unhallowed passion have branded your kisses on my lips, and your soft white hands haunt me like twining serpents even in memory. For, sooth to say, I love not wanton women!"

And again he laughed bitterly, madly.

"That word, that word again! God pity and forgive me!" and with a moan like that of a stricken or tortured creature she rose to her feet, pressing her hands wildly to her brow as one amazed and almost dazed with woe.

Then suddenly, far more so than she had entered, she rushed from the apartment, and careless of consequences in her mood of injured pride, and exasperated more and more, fled to her chamber before she paused, there to find safe refuge for her tortured brain.

Deliberately and at a respectful distance Rena followed, cautiously escorted by Juba, with his dark lantern, who marvelled much to see his stately mistress changed so suddenly to an Atalanta.

After the lapse of a few minutes Mademoiselle Minande rose from her "prie Dieu," hastily contrived with a chair and footstool placed behind the curtain—where on her knees she spent so many moments when her immediate services at his bedside were not needed—rose to her knees and came to the side of the once more delirious patient.

"I should have interfered sooner," she thought, "but I could not, I dared not, confront her; and this is the consequence. And yet I am glad to know she is capable of such devotion! It is a mantle that covers many sins! Poor lady! her rebuff was hard to bear;" and she sighed heavily.

"Marie, Semiramis has been here, and my little 'green domino,'" said Mazon Rivers. "I thought, too, Rosolio had been here nursing me, the good old man, but it was only you, I suppose; you, being a fairy incapable of fatigue, never leave me, I believe, by night or day, which is it now?"

"Night, Mazon; and I promised Dr. Mandamus to return and give you the medicine myself. Here is the first potion; now take it and compose yourself. See, I shall sit just here, I shall not go away."

"Well, let me hold your hand, then. There, that is the way to make all fast. And place your other hand upon my hair, if you please, and sing to me that pretty song of yours, 'Portrait charmante.' I like it better than your opera airs, it soothes me so and suits my simple tastes. Now, Marie, mind you do not change into a starling and steal away!"

And so engaged she sat until he slumbered under the influence of the magnetic touch, the low, sweet, tender voice of her who loved him—slumbered, and after many hours awoke refreshed, as he had not yet done, and craving aliment, ever at hand in the vase, kept warm as this was above the night-lamp, to be administered by the careful nurse, who knew so well how to sustain without surfeiting sick nature.

When Dr. Mandamus came at daylight he found his



patient better, pronounced him out of danger, and the crisis passed. And so in truth was that of Isabella Thermor—a crisis scarce less desperate, perhaps.

Graver, paler, but not a particle less self-possessed, did she appear at the breakfast table of the succeeding day than she had done on the morning of the doctor's revelation to her and her secret resolution.

Nor was that midnight visit ever suspected by any one of those who had not shared her confidence, save Mademoiselle Minande.

She had received a shock on that occasion that had brought her suddenly to her feet—and as successfully as ever was paralytic patient roused to life by a galvanic battery; a shock that caused her brain to act anew, and her blood to flow in healthier currents through her veins.

At once and forever had the scales fallen from her eyes; for whether with or without reason, she believed in the motto of "*in vino veritas*," and related the same saying to the drunkenness of delirium.

Physicians best know whether she was correct in this connection; but for my own part, I attach little consequence as a general thing to the ravings of the fevered brain, save when they happen to proceed from the cause of the malady itself, which certainly was not now the case.

But for the home-thrust of Major Ravenshaw's slender sword, there is little cause to believe that Mazon Rivers would have been ill in body, however mentally aggrieved, or that Mademoiselle Minande would ever have approached him again, or that he would have long retained his anger against the now repulsed and repentant Isabella Thermor.

Be that as it may, the effect was final, and her love for

him as effectually eradicated as ever, to use a harsh comparison, was tumor by the knife of the surgeon—and with scarce less pain.

She would not have lived over again that night she had spent after her visit to the pavilion for the wealth of the Indies; and she turned to Major Ravenshaw with an affection she had not conceived it possible to feel for him before as her shield and refuge from all hard words and dark, unjust suspicions in the future.

There was no longer the least desire on her part to seek, or even inquire for Mazon, whose improvement was, however, daily reported to her by the delighted Major Ravenshaw, happy and grateful in this recovery as a child who has been spared a whipping.

Clara Lindsay looked on all this change of mood and marvelled much.

During the convalescence of Mr. Rivers this young lady kindly assisted Mademoiselle Minande in the light task of nursing—or rather amusing—a merely fanciful patient. On one occasion she happened to pause at the door of the pavilion, and was thus accidentally witness to a little masque, or pantomime, held for his benefit and amusement, on one calm summer's twilight, by the light of a shaded lamp, in the precincts of his chamber; which scene having noiselessly witnessed she deemed it wisest to noiselessly withdraw, unseen by the actors.

On this occasion, just as he had done years before, Rosolio led in the little green domino, attired, as then, in her long, transparent veil, her robes of snow, her silken demi-mask, leaving alone exposed the little rounded chin and snowy throat, with which we are acquainted.

And now, as in those vanished years, she placed on the pillow of her lover a bouquet of the same odorous flowers that had once seemed to him equivalent to blooms of Paradise, and of which he had so spoken to Mrs. Thermor, in his half-delirious mood, it may be remembered, in the hearing of Mademoiselle Minande.

This uttered reminiscence of that episode, on the memory of which she had lived for so many sorrowful years as her bread of life, had strangely stirred her and formed the motive now of this little mystification, if such it may be termed, for, throwing off her mask after a few moments, Mademoiselle knelt suddenly beside the wondering artist and placed a ring upon his finger and kissed his brow, and was (to the surprise and even consternation of Miss Lindsay, who understood only partly the scene before her) received into his entwining arms!

Thus kneeling, she heard only the murmured words of Mademoiselle Minande to Mazeron, without comprehending them, and was startled in turn by the broken exclamations of delight that burst from the lips of her now acknowledged lover.

But to account for all this it is necessary to go back to a little private episode enacted between the two the day before, without witnesses, accidental or otherwise—the result of which was, ere many days, made known to all at Birk-braes.

It was on the morning in question—a soft and hazy sunrise, that promised a burning day—that on opening his eyes with the strange consciousness of being—almost being born again, which forms the chief compensation of convalescence, for all that it still suffers of weakness

or unrest—that Mazon Rivers was aware of the presence of his nurse and physician, engaged in a low-spoken conversation at the eastern window.

“He can certainly dispense with your attentions, Mademoiselle, if you must go, and I shall take care to procure for him a suitable attendant in the absence of M. Rochambeau—good enough, at least, for a man on the mend, as he is now; and as he never would have been, I fancy, but for you,” bowing ceremoniously.

“But is dere no dangaire dat he may lapse back? You smile; give me den de word, my dear doctair.”

“Relapse, Mademoiselle.”

“Ah! c’est cela, relapse back, should we both leave him; for, if so, M. Rochambeau shall remain. I can ver well range to join my friends wisout his company or escort. I know well to travel alone.”

“M. Rochambeau, again,” thought Mazon, “who in the deuce is he? Whom do they mean? I have seen no one except Jenkins. I think that they so called the doctor’s assistant on that first day. The old white-haired man that comes and goes in the shadow and never speaks even when spoken to—unlike a ghost in that—and whose face I never yet have distinctly seen. Who, then, is this M. Rochambeau?”

And, with the peevishness of all weak brains, he began to puzzle himself over the identity of this unknown, instead of solving the matter by one bold question.

So he did not hear the doctor’s assurance that, as the wound was almost healed and the fever had arisen from that cause alone, a relapse was out of the question; but

he did hear very distinctly Mademoiselle's answer to his last interrogatory, and his heart was like a stone in a deep well.

"To-morrow, Monsieur; yes, I go to-morrow; but I shall not forget all that I leave behind me, nor, above all the rest, you, Monsieur le Medicin!"

"Ah, Mademoiselle, vous flattez moi," and unsuspecting of error in a phrase he had once committed to memory for an occasion, he again bowed profoundly, with heightened color.

"I hope some day to evidence my reconnaissance (I do forget the English to-day) in a manner—more substantif—more suitable, Monsieur—when I return to Paris you shall receive une petit boite, vous comprenez?"

"Oh, yes, a little box containing slippers," pursued the doctor mentally, "the inevitable gift of gratitude in a feminine condition. I have already three and thirty pairs unmade, and never to be made up I suppose until my executor disposes of them." Quicker than a flash had this thought gone through his head, so that he was in time for her next remark, or rather her continuation of the subject.

"A little box, of which de receipt please acknowledge."

"Certainly, Mam'selle, certain-monz, and with much pleasure, but give me your address."

"You will receive it, Monsieur, with the boite-box, as you call it. What a queer language! I thought to box was to quarrel; to fight so," and she playfully tapped her own ears.

"Yes, yes; we have many synonyms; our language is rich with nouns."

"And poor with verbs," shaking her head merrily. "Only two tenses in any one of your conjugations—ours so opulent with changes! So expressive."

"Like the Latin in that. I shall go right home and study the French grammar, just to realize your remark, Mademoiselle. And now, farewell! I shall not call again before you leave, perhaps; he is so well. But you can trust him in my hands until you see him once more."

"That will be, Monsieur, perhaps, nevaire!" she said solemnly, "our lives separate here."

"You surprise me, Mademoiselle. I had thought—that is, I had been *informed*—that between you there was a very perfect understanding; a sort of engagement, which report, nay, pardon me, my own observation had partially confirmed."

"Monsieur," she interrupted, with dignity, "I beg you will not lend ear to any such reports more, which do only misapprehend the motive of my conduct to my compatriot. As to Mr. Rivers, I fear he has been the victim of a very misplaced attachment, from the consequences of which he suffers now; but I have not the honor of being its object. Of this I assure you."

"Mademoiselle, all the more do I revere your devoted interest in this poor young man, even if—well—well—some men are made of strange materials—all are not so insensible. I for one, Mademoiselle, would rather have that little glass cart-wheel on your hand than a Queen's signet ring, and if you could make up your mind to live at Sandpiper, my house and hand are at your service. I never saw any woman so fitted for a doctor's wife, and you would soon get over this little affair, and like me pretty well. I think I am better than I seem. I could

always support you comfortably, and that is half the battle with you women."

"*Merci, merci*," she said, with a heightened color, and a cheek on which laughter in her own despite struggled, though in this very strife quick tears of real emotion came to her eyes.

"You are a noble man, but not for me is any man on earth," and she pressed her hand to her heart. "Yet but for one thing this little cart-wheel, as you call it, on my hand—this ring you crave—should belong to you—this bauble I so prize! It has come down to me through many generations, from a great mechanic in the commencement, and, if you will remark more closely, is not a wheel," showing it to him.

"Ah, yes, I see it now, the idea, the numbers! How, very quaint! Your ancestor must have been a—"

"Not mine, perhaps," she interrupted; "but some day I will explain. Hazard no surmise now; and see—our patient wakes!" for it pleased Mazon at that crisis to indulge in a long whining yawn, so as to prevent, perhaps, a repetition of the doctor's trite courtship in his presence.

"Your chocolate is quite ready, Monsieur Mazon," said Mademoiselle, stepping quickly to his side; "and the doctor shall see you eat it before he leaves. He believes not how devouring is your appetite."

"But I will not touch it until the doctor goes," declared the refractory patient. "I am not a wild beast, to be fed in public at an extra charge—even if I am a Bohemian. What was it Ravenshaw called me? Prince Florizel? Where did he get that name, anyhow? Do you know, Doctor?"

Pitying the hesitation of the physician, Mademoiselle interposed, saying: "From ze 'Winter's Night-tale.' Do you not know your Shakespeare bettaire, gentlemen, zan dat? Florizel, a king's son, loved Perdita, you remembaire; a very pleasant lad."

"Ah! Mademoiselle, what a reproach to us all that you should be able to set us aright about our Shakespeare. Why, what a reader you must have been! I cannot see how schoolmarms get time enough for such remote studies. With us, they usually confine themselves to the rudiments."

That strange flutter of silent laughter that Mazon had remarked on that first morning of his close study of her face at the breakfast table at Birk-braes shook Mademoiselle Minande now—as an aspen shakes beneath the breeze—but the doctor, lost in abstract admiration of her talents and attainments, failed to remark it, or the quaint smile upon her lips, and rising from his seat soon after went his way.

"Should you repent, Mademoiselle," he murmured at the door, holding her hand a moment at parting, but not perpetrating a kiss upon its fair surface—"a line will bring me to your feet—I never was so much in earnest in all my life!" relinquishing her unwilling fingers.

"You are too kind," was all she replied, but she felt that a good child had offered her his cake and was moved thereat, and in the very rejection of what to her must have been an unsavory morsel after all.

It is not the estimate we place upon our friends that decides their value, but the preciousness they bear in the sight of the givers themselves; and Marie Minande well knew, from the bitter experience of her life, that a pure



and upright heart is a gem beyond price—even if rough and unpolished—still a gift beyond rubies.

“So you refused the doctor?” Mazon said in French, as he drained the last drop of chocolate, then gave the empty cup into her hand, “and you leave me to-morrow perhaps forever?”

“You heard it all then, Mazon?”

“Yes, all! I would have spoken but for the fear of embarrassing *him*. You, of course, are superior to anything of the kind.”

“In such a cause—yes! It was a mere act of pity on his part, as it seemed, yet very kind and thoughtful. He looks upon me as a little homeless waif, you see, and offered to shelter me, just as I might take in a storm-beaten bird through my window.”

“To cage it thereafter or drown it?”

“No, no; to feed, to cherish it. I shall never forget the man, nor the offer, nor his important services in your sick-room.”

“Yet you would not give him your little cart-wheel ring as a reward, frightful as it is, and so evidently glass; the ring you had from the young girl who was your schoolmate, and to whom, from what you said to-day, I suppose it had descended from some carriagemaker of the time of Louis the Fair. He did not understand this, however, nor your mystification; he thought you spoke of your own ancestry.”

“And so I did, Mazon. I was that little girl. My ancestors were mechanics, and I am proud of it.”

“And mine were gentlemen, cavaliers of England, and I am proud of it. Yet what boots such pride, either for you or me? Behold our condition. Marie, we are Pariahs!”

"You are too bitter, Mazon, too hopeless. Life is not all in pomp and pageantry. There is so much that is enjoyable that escapes you."

"Is servitude so delightful?"

"Ah, you degrade the name of art, by such a title. He who instructs confers a favor beyond the power of the receiver to repay. He who paints a great picture, or composes a great poem, is the teacher of centuries. He is almost a demigod."

"I agree with you, but the small painter, the child's teacher, the Bohemian artists and the foreign gouvernante, what part do they play on the world's stage, Marie?"

"That is too much the subject of your thoughts, Mazon. What part they play in the sight of angels rests with themselves—that is the great consideration."

He turned aside, and veiled his eyes with his thin, trembling right hand, so finely formed that, even in its attenuation, its perfection was marvellous. The left lay carelessly on the counterpane until suddenly clenched as if in a spasm of pain.

"You suffer, Mazon," she said tenderly; "what can I do for you?" and she gently withdrew his hand from his brow, to ascertain the expression of his face, and, to her surprise, found him weeping.

"Leave me to die in solitude," he said almost fiercely—"that is all you can do, I suppose. The manner in which you denied the truth of that report which Clara Lindsay circulated showed me your real state of feeling. How bitter it was—how decided! *That* was what encouraged the doctor to proceed as he did!"

"Would you have had me admit a falsehood, Maze-

ron?" she asked huskily. "He ought not to have inquired. Had I dreamed of his subsequent intention, I should scarcely have answered him so explicitly."

"Yet you alluded to my disappointment. That was very cruel of you, Marie, and a work, I think, of supererogation."

"Not so. A just man, like Dr. Mandamus, ought to be put in possession of the truth. He has heard—he will hear more rumors impugning your honor and intelligence. I wished him to understand matters clearly."

"And you think I have been victimized, Marie?—hardly dealt with?"

"To some extent I do; but you yourself have been much to blame; you fostered your own delusion. It was yourself you loved, like Narcissus; and flattery was your mirror. As for Mrs. Thermor—"

"Do not mention her," he broke forth; "I cannot tell you the shame and confusion I feel when I think of her scorn and my humiliation. I wish I could forget as utterly as I repudiate the very thought of my misplaced passion; for after all it was another—*another*—I truly loved;" and he bent his blazing eyes full on the face of Marie—now beside him.

"Yes; I know," she said faintly; "your little 'green domino;' I have heard it all from Madame Burgenheim. It was she who gave you the opal ring; she who sent back to you that of the twined serpents."

"Which I consecrate to all the furies from this hour," he cried, drawing off from his finger the ring he wore, impulsively, and hurling it far out in the green sward among the rosebushes, through the open window near his bed, whence it was never rescued. "It is you that I

love only, Marie! Worship! Adore! You only that can make being endurable to a poor, weak dreamer, whose reason, whose life you have saved;" and he extended his arms to her piteously, as a yearning child might do to its mother.

But she, folding hers, came not at his summons.

"You mistake gratitude for affection, my friend," she said coldly, as she withdrew to the embrasure of the eastern window, which the sun was now flooding with radiance, and, seating herself beside it, drew out her Penelope's web of crochet work.

"I am not delirious, Marie, nor are you any longer the keeper of a fevered lunatic," he began; but the absurdity of his situation struck him forcibly as he heard her counting aloud the stitches of her netting: "*Un, deux, trois; ah! voila un que est manque,*" and she commenced the work of unravelling.

"You are hard of heart and cruel, Marie."

"I have never been so esteemed, Mazon. I am sorry you think so ill of me. I had thought at least to have secured your confidence," she replied gently. "*Quatre, cinq, six—mais qui va bien encore!*" and she netted again.

"Was there never a time in which you might have loved me, Marie Minande?" asked the sick man, elevating himself slightly on his elbow with the aid of his pillow. "Was Constance Lindsay quite wrong in the conjecture she set afloat, or did she see clearly into your frigid bosom with those spear-like, serpent eyes of hers?"

"There was a time, Mazon," she answered low.

"But that time is over, you would say, Marie

Minande. And shall I tell you why? It is because I am baffled and unsuccessful. The would-be genius whom your own sagacity first stripped of his borrowed plumes—the mocked and discarded lover, the trampled vagabond, the beaten hound of a circle of arrogant aristocrats, the weakling, the dreamer, the beggar—can have no part in the infinite, calm and proud self-sustaining dignity of your life and your ambition.”

“But now,” she said; “but now I was to you the ‘petite gouvernante,’ the ‘little grisette,’ even, whose insignificance alone protected her in your sight from being an object of derision in comparison with the queen of your affections; yet I am unchanged in every respect. How then can I comprehend this sudden burst of emotion, of admiration, or attribute it to aught beyond your own feeble and excitable condition? Samson’s strength will return with his hair. Poor ringlets, how sadly you were shorn,” she thought; “but I have every one all safe, nevertheless; and then, and then, old feelings, old prejudices will assert themselves.”

“Never, Marie—never! But if you abandon me now I cannot answer for consequences. Oh, woman! wisest, purest, best, most lovely to look upon of all I have ever known—a creature beyond humanity almost—forsake me not in my weakness and despair! Your life is vowed to good works. You are a saint—an angel! Take me, then, under your sheltering wings; protect me, guide me, love me, save me from myself; be my staff of strength, my rock of hope, my pillar of light! Be my beloved wife!”

“You have spoken at last the words that require an

answer," she said, laying aside her work sadly. "All the rest, however enthusiastic and devoted, were tame compared to these. I will reply to you when I shall have received the consent of your green domino, not before, and when I may justly wear her opal ring. Until then be patient. I must unravel your past, and you—is there nothing you wish to learn of mine?"

"Nothing, Marie; you are perfection! Whatever you tell me will suffice me as entirely as if an angel from heaven descended to reveal to me your past."

"In this respect we differ, Mazon, as perhaps in one other—in outspoken openness of affection. But I too have a history which you must know before I can in any way reply to your request that our two lives may be one. I will remain one day longer, and then you shall hear all that will interest or concern you to know. Now I must leave you in the care of Juba while I take my breakfast, for I am still fasting and weary with my long night's vigil."

On the evening of the same day, and before she gave up her watch to the nightly attendant, who for the nonce was Juba himself—M. Rochambeau, about whom he had forgotten to inquire, being wearied out—Mazon renewed his fervent suit to Mademoiselle Minande.

He seized the moment when she was giving him his sleeping draught to take her hands in his, press them to his lips, and to murmur his supplications in her not unwilling ear.

"Have I not enjoined you to be patient?" she said, reprovingly. "This is ungenerous, Mazon, and unwise."

"Then say that you still love me, Marie."

"Have I ever told you that I did not? I only acknowledged that at one time it was not impossible. I must think and pray before I answer you."

"No, no; you must tell me now, Marie. My rest, perhaps my life, depends upon that simple assertion. Say 'I love you, Mazon.' The words are not hard to repeat. Say them, my Marie. They will act upon me like a charm."

"But simple repetition means nothing."

"I know, but the very sound will comfort me."

"Be satisfied, then. Mazon, I love you!" And bending over him for an instant, she lightly touched her lips to his brow, and vanished like the figment of a dream.

Nor did she return to him again until the little masque scene was enacted—which Constance Lindsay paused before the window to observe—and making wings to her feet, flew forth at once to repeat in strictest confidence to each in turn of the household of Birk-braes.

In this little episode Mrs. Thermor recognized the motive of Mademoiselle's advent to Birk-braes, and promised herself on the first convenient day thereafter to acquaint her titled relative of the matter through the medium of a long epistle.

"She little thought what she was doing when she sent her here," mused Isabella Thermor, "but Madame Burgenheim knew, of course, bete-match-maker—that she is! Well, well! It is better so—very suitable—and all that sort of thing, and thank heaven I can see Bottom, the weaver—as he is, at last."

Very like Titania she looked, to be sure, at that moment—a woman who weighed one hundred and sixty

pounds avoirdupois, and carried her flesh splendidly, but certainly was no fairy.

On the tenth of June, after a polite interview with Mrs. Thermor and Major Ravenshaw, in which gracious things were said on either side and before Eugenie's return from Baltimore, Mr. Rivers and Mademoiselle Minande, accompanied by M. Rochambeau, left Birk-braes for Baltimore, whence, after the nuptial knot had been tied, they meant to sail for Havre.

As she left the pavilion, after this ordeal was over—one made necessary by circumstances—Mrs. Thermor said to her lover, "Did you notice that little red glass ring of Mademoiselle's on her artist's hand; was it not ridiculous?" And both laughed heartily.

The rich are so amused at sentiment in the poor.

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## CHAPTER XI.

There was a sound of revelry by night.—BYRON.

What business had they there at such a time?—BYRON.

IT was a gala night, that fourteenth eve of June, in which countless stars shone down from the dark purple hall of heaven like angel eyes watching the children of earth at their revels; shone on the illuminated gardens, the rose-wreathed bowers, the many-windowed mansion of Birk-braes, all ablaze with the radiant light that lamps and chandeliers flung out upon the bosom of the tranquil night through crystal and lace, through casement and drapery.



The fishermen returning late with their loaded boats saw from the calm Chesapeake the unwonted illumination, and rocked idly on their oars for some time to enjoy, observe and conjecture about the unusual splendor. Nothing but a marriage feast, they thought in their simplicity, could justify such lavishness of light, and so they went home to tell their families that the rich widow Thermor was that night entering into her second nuptials.

It might almost as well have been so, for all the freedom the poor lady in question should evermore enjoy from the presence of her devoted knight, Major Ravenshaw, who had followed her like her own shadow from room to room, from garden to garden, during the whole busy time of her preparation.

From Baltimore Genie had returned loaded with paraphernalia and flowers, and the chartered steamboat that brought down the guests to Sandpiper was burdened as well with fruits and wines and confections rich and rare enough for the table of a king.

A new service of decorated china had been added to that already possessed by Mrs. Thermor by the thoughtfulness of Major Ravenshaw, and the extension tables of the whole Bay settlement had been brought into requisition to set the magnificent refreshments on, in the form of an immense capital letter **H**, which filled the spacious basement dining-room, built expressly for a banqueting hall, with arched and lofty dome, long and wide in extent, and marble-paved, where two hundred guests, without crowding, could be entertained and feasted.

The ancient table-cloths of damask, as thick and glossy as brocade satin, and which were heirlooms in the Ther-

mor family, their ancestor having been a famous Flemish weaver, who made his immense fortune by the creation of such superb napery as became a specialty.

These magnificent cloths had been respectfully resurrected for the occasion from the tombs of the Capulets—an enormous cedar chest, safeguard from moths—and subjected to a bleaching process, known to all accomplished Southern laundresses, so as to shine again in all their pristine snow and purity.

An “Epergne” in the centre of the cross piece of the simulated **H** bore fifty waxen lights in magnificent candelabra, grouped in pyramidal shapes, and also coeval with the earliest Thermor.

As many more, scattered at intervals in the same stately style of adornment, illuminated each of the two long tables, ornamented with snowy pyramidal cakes, vases of flowers and stacks of candied fruits, as was the fashion of that sumptuous yet simple time, before war and poverty had engrafted economy on all slaveholders.

Sugar and service were cheap in those days, and these have much to do with party-giving; for trained domestics saved all labor on the part of the heads of establishments, except that of the busy, provident brain.

It was worth while to entertain, when by the wave of a wand, ices were compounded, frozen and crystal jellies made, and perfect cakes baked and meats roasted and boiled to a turn. When from closets and chests, and cupboard and cellar came forth exquisite china and rare cut glass, and silver and wines, and damask enough to entertain legions of guests, all without the touch or the wetting of a finger on the part of the hostess, and by the skilful aid of cheerful, intelligent and careful

familiar spirits, most easily summoned from their "vasty deep."

Such were our slaves in all wealthy, well-regulated families. Such was our style of life. What are both now?

"N'importe," as the French say with a shrug and grimace, which three in one (speech, emphasis, and expression) contain more philosophy of a certain sort than Locke has ever written.

"N'importe," let us proceed in the path of our story, nor hover more over the abyss of the inevitable.

"Commençons *apres le deluge*," let us not digress, even in the direction of our recent ruin.

Charles Lamb tells of a Chinaman who burned down a house to roast a pig, nay, many houses. But there I am at it again in spite of my resolution.

Let me cross my heart this time!

The lamentations of Genie at not having seen and taken leave of her dear Mademoiselle Minande were heard above all the clinking of glass and china and the tuning of viols at Birk-braes, and she was only partially consoled for this disappointment by the arrival of her cousins, Rose and Lionel Blamire, just in time for the festival. They had seen Mademoiselle in Baltimore on the day preceding her marriage, and were the bearers of many affectionate messages to the regretful Genie—among which were numberless promises and assurances of ultimate meeting which, improbable as they might have seemed to more considerate minds, Genie's ardently embraced as stable truths, fast anchored in the future.

The string of Roman pearls which had constituted Mademoiselle Minande's sole ornament while at Birk-

braes was carefully wrapped in cotton and placed in a pretty box and sent to Genie with prayer that she would keep the beads always, and even wear them sometimes, for the sake of the giver, if not for their intrinsic value, and over this simple present she wept many tears.

"It is positively a very good imitation, and you may wear them at the festival since your heart is set upon it, my love; but afterward consign them to your drawer. Why, Genie, if they were real pearls the price would be fabulous; they are so large, but as it is you could buy them for ten dollars, wax beads of all things!"

"I don't care, mamma, I value them more than if they were d'a nonds. Her hand has touched them, her sweet, white, gentle hand. She has worn them in her hair—her soft, black silky hair. Oh! mamma, I shall never love any one half so well again—never! don't mock my little present."

There came a day when that gift was highly estimated, and for its own sake, by more than Genie, from whom thousands of dollars could not have purchased it now!

But if the daughter had been made happy through the means of the Blamires, not less did they bear sweet ministry to the spirit of the mother, in the shape of a letter sent by a private hand from New York to Baltimore (for in the former city its writer had already arrived) promising the presence of the Countess Cluche herself at an early day—perhaps on the very next—at Birk-braes.

She had anticipated her visit by three months, partly because they could do no longer without Mademoiselle Minande at Les Hirondelles, and partly for reasons that would be explained later. Might she hope for a hearty welcome from her aunt and cousin?

The letter closed abruptly after this so easily answered question, which, however, the writer thereof must receive a reply to in person, as it seemed, since her coming was so suddenly announced.

Mrs. Thermor arranged to give her cousin her own bed-room until the throng occasioned by the festival should be over (should she arrive on the fourteenth), and retire for one night into her spacious dressing-room with Genie, after which necessity two of the handsomest rooms at Birk-braes were to be placed at the disposition of her relative while she remained her guest, and grace it with her aristocratic presence.

"She must be quite an eccentric person to do such impulsive things, yet the writing is that of a staid, sensible woman," said Major Ravenshaw, who believed in chi-rography apropos of character. "For my own part," he continued, "I wish she had remained at home two months longer."

"It is quite an honor to receive her at any time," rejoined Mrs. Thermor, pensively, "my own dear cousin—niece, I should say, perhaps—but at our age it seems so absurd that one should occupy so much the superior position to the other. We are about the same age I believe."

"Ah, then she is an old maid with lap dogs. Pardon me, Isabella," as he saw a shadow flit over her fair brow; "you know a widow is so different from a single—woman—a widow is not very old at fifty."

"A widower, you mean," retorted Isabella, somewhat sharply; "I beg you will try and remember my age better, Major Ravenshaw, when you apologize. I am just thirty-nine."

"Yes, yes, I know, very young for a widow; but if you were sixty, Isabella, as handsome as you are, it would make no difference to me."

"A very appreciable one to me, Major Ravenshaw, I assure you. I count every day of value now—every hour, indeed."

"Yes, yes, I know the sands run very fast after fifty, and—"

Just then they were interrupted by the abrupt entrance of Rena, who, in a very excited manner, laid her complaint before the sovereign lady of Birk-braes!

"Mistress, dere is a real 'bellion down in de freezin' cellar, 'mong de ice-cream hands, and Unele Duff says he can't make dem boys beat de cream as dey freezes to save his life, widout you remands 'em to, because, an' de vanilla done give out an' de pineapples."

"Good heavens, Rena! I am coming. It is really wonderful that Duff cannot control half a dozen stupid boys; and you know very well yourself wherè to get the vanilla beans, and as to the pineapples," but by this time her voice was fading out of hearing, and it seemed to Major Ravenshaw, infatuated man that he was, that with it all sweet sounds had vanished.

This was about three o'clock in the afternoon of the day of the "Feast of Roses," and the love-sick major saw the object of his affections no more until, robed in blue satin, with a tiara of pearls and diamonds on her sunny head, her neck and arms bound with the same rich jewels, she stood unmasked to receive her guests (representing no particular character, but dubbed, by Miss Constance Lindsay, Artemesia) in the great drawing-room opening on the umbra, with one hand gracefully

reposing on a marble urn, in which cards were dropped by all who came masked, to be drawn forth and referred to later in the evening by the fair lady supposed to be caressing the ashes of her husband in her draught of pleasure on that memorable occasion.

These, of course, disclosed the real name of each masker, male or female, but as yet they were honorably sealed, even from the eyes of the mistress of the revels.

The little steamer had brought down more than a hundred guests from Baltimore, and as many more had assembled from the Bay settlement and some remote neighborhoods, so that the halls and saloons were filled, yet not overcrowded, with brilliant costumes and grotesque characters.

All of Moore's Oriental people were there. His "Hafed" and "Hinda," his "Nourmahal" and "Namounia," his "Lalla Rookh" and "Feramorz," his "Fadladeen" and "Veiled Prophet of Korassan," and the rest, whose names are legion. And Byron's tragic crew; his "Parasina" and "Hugo," his "Haidee" and "Lambro," his "Conrad" and "Medora," his "Lara" and "Gulnare," his "Myrrha" and "Sardanapalus."

His Merry Andrew too, Mazeppa, and Laura and Beppo, and Alp, the Adrian renegade, very absurdly represented in burlesque, and I regret to include in such company his Prisoner of Chillon, travestied into a very hairy old beggar with a tattered hat and a clanking chain around one leg, who went about asking for bread—not

"Such as for a thousand years  
Was moistened by captives' tears,"

but fresh, if crusts.

Southey, too, had furnished his quota, and "Thalaba"

and "Kehama" contributed no little to the merriment of the evening, solemnly ludicrous as they were in their separate vocations.

I have neither time nor inclination to give details, even if the imagination of my readers did not at once compass and comprehend the Bayaderes and the Arab Chief, and the duplicates of all the poetic characters, though with a separate getting up, in many cases, that left room for conjecture as to which might be correct, and the "Zouaves" and Moriscoes that formed a background for the brilliant pageant.

Some daring masquers had gone back to the time of Cleopatra, and represented Egypt's Queen, with Antony and Charmian as accessories, going about dolefully, with a small stuffed serpent lying on her white bosom, fearful to more than one.

When the evening was about half over two Bedouins came in closely wrapped in their characteristic gowns, both evidently females, to the close observer, from their step and bearing, though one of them was nearly a head taller than the other, and might, but from some slight peculiarities of the sex, have passed readily for the man she simulated.

The other was unmistakably young and a girl of slender and graceful proportions.

These, having dropped their cards into a marble vase and made a profound obeisance to the mistress of the revels, were about to pass on, when she apprehended them by grasping a long hanging sleeve of each in one of her own soft hands.

So far she had detected, or thought she had done so, an acquaintance under every disguise; but these were



evidently strangers, and something in their height and gait had irresistibly suggested to her the presence of Mazon Rivers and his bride.

The masks stood before her dumb and resistless, bowing low and shaking their heads stupidly in reply to all of her questions and even demands.

It was their cue to understand Arabic only, so that she was obliged to let them depart without the satisfaction she craved, but which she knew would come later, when at the announcement of supper all should unmask.

In the meantime two bands in separate ball-rooms were pealing forth their splendid music, chiefly from "Robert le Diable" and "Massaniello;" the quadrille and waltz and galop of the period succeeded each other in strict and rapid succession. The mixture of bright colors and the whirl of the dancers, the gleam of jewels and the rich odor of flowers, bewildered the beholder and excited every sense to rapturous recognition.

In a pause of the music one of those silent spells fell over the festive halls, not uncommon at entertainments where mirth and exertion commence too fiercely to be adequately sustained; and at this dumb crisis of the dance fever, encouraged by admiring friends no doubt, Miss Lindsay, who sustained the character of "Hinda" in the "Fire Worshippers," wailed out her own funeral song—a favorite one of hers, be it remembered.

The shrill coronach of "Araby's Daughter" struck on the unprepared ear of the crowd, like some insect pipe succeeding the concert of the mocking bird, and as the quavering notes died away, another richer voice took up the strain, and the simple air and words of the last song

of "Nourmahal" rang out like the clear, sweet tones of the nightingale.

A second "Nourmahal" (for one there was already in the motley crowd) stood with myrtle wreath lifted high above her head, while from her lips issued a strain that seraphs might have been content to pour. The dress she wore was richly yet lightly embroidered in flowers of gold on a warp of muslin fleecy as gauze, such as sultanas alone are privileged to wear, and from her tiara of sapphires, that quivered like blue flames, fell a snowy veil thickly wrought with seed pearl and bordered with roses that concealed from every eye her face and the contour of her form—all save the lovely arms and perfect hands holding aloft the slender myrtle crown.

There was a moment of silence when the song was over, then a buzz, a rush, an effort to surround the singer, who had escaped, however, during the slight confusion consequent on the surprise, and who disappeared before she could be intercepted.

"It is Jenny Lind," said some one. "I would know her voice among a thousand. She is expected, you know. I heard her when in Amsterdam."

"It is Mademoiselle," said Mrs. Thermor, decidedly, "and I do not understand the thing at all. Do find me the Bedouins; they shall unmask at once. I am resolved to unfold this mystery, Major Ravenshaw."

Even as she spoke the mysterious pair stood beside her on the umbra behind the window, near which she sat while she delivered this ukase to her devoted knight, and both unmasked at the same moment, when she saw beneath one hood the dark, strong features of a hand-

some woman of middle age, and beneath the other the smiling features of Mademoiselle Minande.

But when supper was announced it was discovered that the Bedouins were gone; nor could any trace of them be discovered, and the card that they had dropped bore this singular revelation to the eyes of the astonished and indignant hostess and her sympathizing Major:

"The Countess Cluche and attendant."

"It is a shabby trick my cousin Cluche has paid me, and one I shall never forget," she said in her wrath.

"As to Mademoiselle, her impudence in returning here surpasses all I have ever heard of, after her positive refusal to remain until after the festival. But she is nothing but a slave, I suppose, to the whims of that ugly old maid. My age, indeed! I recognized her at once by her resemblance to that affected, out-of-date picture—the one I showed you, Major Ravenshaw."

"I remember; but I saw no resemblance, save that both are dark. The picture was beautiful, and tall and thin. It must be the other sister."

"Why she looked as old as the hills, and the other sister would be comparatively young, you know, if she were living; not more than four or five and twenty. My cousin looked at least ten years my senior, didn't she, Major Ravenshaw? Yet I saw the likeness."

"Yes, forty-five if a day. You are nine and thirty, I believe you say, Isabella? Let me see"—counting on his fingers—"whether you have not forgotten a year or two. When I went to Mexico, you were—"

"Just fifteen! Now do be quiet with your dates, and let your palm alone."

He had just deposited three of his fingers mysteriously

therein, each representing ten years, and was coming down with the other so as to complete the abhorred number that represented her real age, when she made this diversion.

“Ha! ha! very good; very good, indeed. Did you mean that for a pun, my dear? or was it all accident?”

“Not at all; and to show you that I intended it, I will now add my invitation to you in the words of Nour-mahal, to ‘fly to the desert; oh, fly with me,’ for you hear the second supper is announced, and that portends the breaking up of the ball; so come, you know that is the place for my good date-palm.”

And she led him forth triumphantly. She had reason to be proud of her captive, and she was beginning to feel this now that the spell of Mazon was broken. Yet the reappearance of Mademoiselle and the slighting conduct of her cousin Cluche, were circumstances that greatly interfered with her delight in the exhibition of her power over Major Ravenshaw on that occasion.

“No doubt he (referring to Mazon) was in the shadow, looking on at my discomfiture,” she thought. “He the only man who ever saw the weakness of Isabella Thermor’s nature, or who had power to sting her to the quick! The only man she ever—well it is over—over and forever! and I forgive him. But her I cannot forgive, for by this time she knows all of my humiliation.

“The Countess Cluche, too, doubtless is admitted into this confidence, for she seems infatuated with these favorites of hers, and many instances of her aunt’s infatuation as well, I suppose, are offered for her entertainment. Her aunt, indeed! Ugly, old dressed up

effigy. I wish we had not a drop of kindred blood between us.

"But, thank heaven! with my position and Major Ravenshaw's splendid fortune and soldierly reputation, we shall be perfectly independent of her and her surroundings during our promised trip to Europe.

"We must wait till Genie is eighteen, it is true, according to her father's foolish, perverse will, or leave her behind us, the last of which is simply impossible to me; but the years will soon roll round, and it will give me the greater pleasure to cut '*Les Hirondelles*' and its inhabitants and dependents while we journey through the provinces of France.

"I have no doubt that contemptible young couple will hibernate with that old maid to the end of mine and her own owlish life, for the sake of a small legacy! So French! The whole proceeding so entirely French," curling her exquisite upper lip in consolatory scorn.

This mental review of the situation took place after Mrs. Thermor had retired to her chamber on the night of the ball, or rather morning, for a few faint rays of crimson streaked the gray dawn as she concluded her reflections sitting by the half-open jealousy—which after drawing carefully together—she left and threw herself wearily on her luxurious bed, which for the sake of her titled cousin she had thought of temporarily abandoning—it may be remembered—on this occasion.

Pleasant dreams soon came to her relief. She thought that Mazon Rivers knelt beside her couch and clasped her hand, and asked her for Genie, and that she graciously consented, and was to be his mother-

in-law, and that Major Ravenshaw insisted upon it that both marriages should be solemnized on the same day.

She woke at noon, refreshed and rested, and was pleased to know that even in her sleep she had not entertained one traitorous thought toward him who was so soon to be her husband.

For sleep is in itself a treachery, and tries the integrity of the stoutest heart with its subtle sophistry that none explain, endeavor as they may to account for its phenomena—a treachery and a mystery!

When the festival was over and its guests had all dispersed, when the great banquet hall had been restored to its original dreariness and surrendered once more to the guardianship of the Apollo and nine muses who in guise of glossy imitation Parian marble adorned the walls like unslumbering ghosts—when even the Lindseys had gone home and Major Ravenshaw had agreed to depart to return no more until the day fixed upon for his nuptials, then and not till then Rosa Blamire made her revelation!

Later, in confirmation of what she told, the following letter reached the hand of Mrs. Thermor—and although it was never answered, and, indeed, needed no reply—it did much towards assuaging the storm of anger in her breast against Mademoiselle Minande.

We lay it in its translated form before our readers, premising that it was written in the character and vernacular of Mademoiselle.

All former letters and communications from “*Les Hirondelles*” and even the note of Countess Cluche, signifying her approach to Birk-braes from New York, were in the chirography of her friend and private secretary, as shall be seen.

## CHAPTER XII.

## LETTER OF MARIE EUPHROSINE, COUNTESS CLUCHE.

But now I was the lord  
Of this fair mansion, mistress of my servants,  
Queen of myself, and even now, but now  
This house, these servants, and this same myself  
Are yours, my lord, I give you with this ring.

SHAKESPEARE.

There is nothing in France too good for him,  
But only she!—SHAKESPEARE.

A ROMANTIC wish to be loved for my own sake led me, my still dear and honored aunt and sole remaining relative, to enter your family in the disguise of an humble governess, for which breach of social observance and Christian frankness I, at the very outset, entreat your pardon.

That this will be granted me I firmly believe—before you have read to the end of these pages—in which my sole apology is traced with the outline of my life; for nothing short of a knowledge of its troubles, and the morbid train of thought to which these have given rise, could in any degree extenuate the error of my enterprise or the mystification I have practised.

Let me begin, then, with the death of my sister Eugenie, for previous to that event I had been destined for a cloister, and may scarcely have been said to know what life really meant, dwelling as I did contentedly yet very quietly in the sweet monotony of the convent of which our aunt Hildegarde was the Abbess.

In the prime of her distinguished beauty my sister died, and I, the little plain cadette of our race, twelve

years younger, found my vocation suddenly changed, and was summoned, at the early age of sixteen, to take her place at the head of our father's establishment.

You may or may not have heard, dear aunt, that my mother lost three children between the birth of her eldest and her youngest daughters, dying herself when her Marie was scarcely three weeks old. A son had succeeded my sister Eugenie's birth, who lived to be several years of age, and was his father's pride, and after the loss of this boy his most earnest wish was to embrace another.

I was his first disappointment, and it was not considered safe, I have since been told, to trust me in his presence when an infant, so deep was his loathing for my misfortune in not being able to represent his name and honors.

I was fortunate enough to find in Madame Burgenheim—my sister's governess—a second mother, and in that dear and gentle sister herself a protectress, powerful if not firm. Yet in spite of their entreaties I was torn from their arms in my seventh year, to be sent to the convent of San Idulfor, where my father's sister reigned supreme, and save at rare intervals I saw and knew them no more for years. For to do my aunt Hildegarde justice, she loved me as well as she dared—not as she could love anything—and yet she relaxed no severity in my favor. I was the convent pet, spoiled and indulged by the other nuns, who amused themselves with my peculiarities, but my relative ruled me with a rod of spring steel—rather than of iron—yet ever for my good.

She compelled me to studious habits which no healthy, happy child ever voluntarily acquired; and I thus by degrees learned to love knowledge for its own sake, as else I might not have done.



Strangely enough for one so cold and stern, my return to the world destroyed her life.

She was never seen to smile after my father removed me from beneath her care, and declined rapidly from that hour, her last prayers having been offered for me, whom she considered lost, save through a miracle.

Under your roof, my young and beautiful aunt, has that miracle indeed come to pass! For the affection of Mazon has transfigured me; and thus are her prayers and prophecies answered at last.

But in the beginning my life gave little promise of such an ending, nor did I leave the convent of San Idulfor without dark misgiving as to my future and sorrowful regrets, such as I could scarcely make intelligible to people of society. Peace, order, a certain limited gayety even, had I there enjoyed. But from the first I found myself at "Les Hirondelles" in a gloomy prison.

Madame Burgenheim, who had continued to make "Les Hirondelles" her home long after the completion of my sister's education, influenced by the affection she bore her pupil, not more than a few years her senior (for the young widow of twenty had taken charge of the little girl of ten soon after her mother's death), Madame Burgenheim, dressed in sables and bearing woe in every feature, received me sadly yet affectionately, and as long as she was permitted to remain near me did all in her power to alleviate my situation.

A year passed in more than monastic gloom before his intentions were formally announced to me by my father. He made these known to me on the arrival of Count Delmar, his nephew and his heir, from a journey to Palestine. He had been, I knew, the betrothed husband

of my sister—her nuptials with whom had been delayed for years, from time to time, by her own declining and peculiar state of health and nerves—all arising as was well understood by her companion and trusted physician, from her excessive aversion to the man her father had commanded her to espouse; and now the precious possession was to be transferred to me, to make sure and fast the succession of Les Cluches.

It did not accord either with my taste or ideas of propriety to step into such harness, and I told my father this in plain and positive terms even before I had seen the man he intended as my master. But afterward every instinct of my nature arose in rebellion.

He made no conditions with my loathing. He did not say, "You will be poor, Marie, and he will be rich and powerful, for my name must find its representative in my own blood. Marry him or not, as you list. The loss is yours, and unless you find another suitor to give you your proper place in life, you must return to your convent."

Nothing of this—no choice was given me—he simply smiled at my objections and turned away. He was one of those men (but I did not know it then) whose silence and whose smile were more to be dreaded than the frowns and curses of others, or even of his own. More than any man I have ever known in real life he represented the traits of the middle age. Strong, stern, cruel and uncompromising as he was, he was the "Sieur Ausur" of the old chronicles, and, because he was brave and honorable as to truth and contract, despised all weaker virtues.

I tremble sometimes, remembering that I am of his

race, lest the persistence and resolution which form the groundwork of my character might, in time, likewise harden into adamant.

He had been a man of strong passions in his youth, we heard, but what harder than lava cooled, or more intractable?

Then turning from this view of the subject I thank God earnestly that somewhat of the softness and pliability of my mother's nature, of my sister's, of yours even, dear aunt, may temper this disposition to strong purpose.

This hardness, which came to me with the blood of the La Cluches, did, however, unquestionably lie at the root of that implacable resolution, which tortures could not have changed or qualified, and which gave me strength, to oppose tyranny and chains, and gain my liberty; and lastly, when the great obstacle of my personal freedom was removed by the merciful hand of death to return voluntarily to bondage and oppression, and bear them firmly, if not cheerfully, to the end for duty's sake.

I will not weary you with details of the persecution I endured during the two long years of my first abode at "Les Hirondelles."

After a few months of my opposition to his wishes, Madame Burgenheim, as one suspected of complicity with rebellion, was harshly and hastily dismissed and forbidden to communicate thereafter in any manner with the heiress of "Les Hirondelles." But for this separation I think like poor Eugenie I should have continued to bear my loathly lot, and have imitated the procrastinations of Penelope by the aid of my companion, rather

than to have chosen the desperate alternative of flight—but you will hear how this was forced upon me.

At the conclusion of the second year of my captivity, my father changed his tactics and resolved to give me a glimpse of that brilliant world I could never hope to enter save as the wife of Count Delmar.

In pursuance of this scheme, and attended ever closely by my avowed lover, I was dragged across the face of Europe, from court to court, from city to city, from ball to opera, from theatre to gallery of art, until weary of sight-seeing—with no sympathetic influences to aid me in enjoyment—I longed to die; nay, thought of death sometimes as an escape from evil that my own act might some day achieve.

It was at the time such rebellious thoughts were rife in my heart that I heard of my aunt Hildegarde's death, and her prayers for my welfare and happiness, from the lips of my old convent confessor—the Pere Ignace—who had come forth from his seclusion to announce to me in person her demise, and to exhort me to constancy, fortitude and religion.

He was my special Providence on that trying occasion, and making an excuse of my mourning for my aunt, one that my father's pride of family compelled him to admit, I hastened back to "*Les Hirondelles*" resolved to lose myself in study and prayer, and so defy the vampire of my peace.

The Count Delmar, who, steeped in profligacy, had but feebly dissented from my sister's wish to procrastinate their union, found in my fierce and more open opposition an incentive to passion, and cared not long to conceal its baleful fires.

In the presence of a creature whom, as a substitute for the pure and noble Madame Burgenheim, my father had placed beside me in the light of a companion, he dared soon after our return to "Les Hirondelles" to compel me to receive his odious vows, and even caresses, while she, lost to every instinct of woman, refused me assistance in extricating myself from his loathly entwining arms.

With his hot kisses still branded upon my burning face, I flew to my father for redress. He received me coldly, called me a still greater prude than Eugenie had been, bade me submit with a good grace to the addresses of my suitor, soon to be my husband, with or without my consent.

"You have seen that he loved you, and that is all a woman need care for," he said.

My resolution was taken promptly. The wife of Rosolio, whose husband was then in the employment of Mazon's uncle—having, like Madame Burgenheim herself, been rudely thrust from "Les Hirondelles" for alleged sympathy with its unfortunate mistress—had been my foster-mother, and loved me well. I had supplied the place of her own dead baby when she was already too far advanced in years to hope for farther offspring, and she had, in her vigorous middle life, given to me, no doubt, a stamina I derived not from my young and fragile mother.

With her assistance—the more freely given from a knowledge of my wrongs, which she personally resented—I fled by night from "Les Hirondelles," eluding, with no small difficulty, the vigilance of the dragon set to keep baleful watch above me.

Disguised as a fruit-woman going to the neighboring town to sell her grapes and quinces, I ventured to ascend the diligence and found safety on the top of the vehicle, while the interior was being inspected at every point.

I reached Paris undetected, and was there warmly received by the friends who had been apprised of my approach, and by the aid of Madame Burgenheim and her brother, a physician (once Eugenie's) of great respectability and some influence, I managed to elude all pursuit of police or detectives.

This man, I found later, had been a silent worshipper of my ill, beautiful sister, and for her sake served me.

Of my residence in the old Hotel St. Germain under the protection of my friend, herself in easy circumstances, my Mazon has told you; for I was the little green domino whose story, so far as he knew, he related to you in his atelier, as he tells me. Nor was the necessity which instigated this disguise in itself a fiction. After a slight attack of varioloid, which left my eyes in a precarious condition, I was advised by my physician—the Docteur Rambouillet, already alluded to—to wear a lengthened shade, which might serve two purposes; and to this precaution I doubtless owe my indemnity from identification during the greater part of my stay in Paris.

It enabled me also to enjoy the privilege of pursuing the study I loved in the public galleries, and years later to carry out my plan for recalling the heart of my early love, without affording him the knowledge of our past acquaintance—the heart of Mazon Rivers, the only man I have ever known or loved, or cared to have love me.

Yet my venture came as near being a wreck as ever

did ship, which only grazed the breakers and suffered scathe and hardship in so doing.

It is over now; yet not for all my life is worth would I consent to live again the last three months of my existence. Their suffering was extreme—was exquisite.

How little we can foresee the result of any undertaking! I have only myself to blame, dear aunt, that with you the experiment I made was not perfect—you, whose affection I should have gained sooner or later I am sure, as I have Genie's, had not a fatal obstacle interposed between us.

What was there to warn me that in sending my lover hither I was exposing him to dangers greater than the transit of the ocean presented—to temptations more potent than Paris itself could offer? How could I foretell that in you, the discreet woman of nearly forty years (for such my fancy had pictured you), Mazon Rivers would behold a siren of fascination, whose mature yet splendid beauty should throw into comparative insignificance my poorer charms?

I own that the result was disastrous to my plans, and to my amour propre. The great passion of his life was for you—as such delusions are called—yet I thank you that you gave him to me at last, even with broken wings.

Yes, shattered, disappointed, and enfeebled as he is, I receive him from your hands gratefully, as a gem of great price, treasured by a lapidary for its own sake, which a queen might throw to a slave or dissolve in vinegar! He is all mine now, and my love shall envelop him like a robe or mantle of eider down, in which a mother would wrap her child to defend and protect him

from sun and storm. He may not love me as I love him, but enough for my deserts.

There is always one of two who loves most, and it is better that the excess should be on the weaker side. Love is a woman's life!

I have related to you a portion of my early trials, but perhaps you will consider those I have still to portray as even more severe.

After the violent death of the Count Delmar and the rapidly increasing blindness of my father, caused by the same catastrophe that destroyed the life of his nephew and heir—a stroke of lightning killing the one and paralyzing the other, I deemed it my duty to return to “*Les Hirondelles*” without delay, and endeavor to assuage the condition of my now desolate parent.

I own I had looked forward to a different reception on this voluntary surrender to his authority than that with which I met.

He greeted me coldly, and as if we had just parted, and at once proceeded to appoint my occupation and my limits.

I was to promise him never to leave the confines of the hedged grounds of the chateau, or failing so to promise and perform, to go forth forever, with his curse.

I was to keep his accounts—so ran his fiat—to transact his business, read to him from such works as he should select, attend to his household, and in turn receive my livelihood at his hands.

Such was the stern contract closed at once between the Count Cluche and his only daughter, a woman worthy of better things in her own estimation, yet willing to do his bidding, if in so doing she might ameliorate his condi-



tion and gain his confidence without other losses of liberty.

I told you once how deeply I had studied mania. I was in the hope of finding this excuse for one I sought to love and reverence, but in vain. I could not reconcile his clear perception, his power of infinite detail even in his purblind condition, his persistent persecution of a being now wholly submissive to his will, with what we read of lunacy, strive as I might.

His house had never been a sumptuous one, although his revenue was immense, but now it was maintained on the most sordid principles. Unable himself to eat aught but the most simple food on account of his failing health, he confined me, with my keen young appetite, my vigorous organization, to the diet of an anchorite. Under this ordeal my strength failed rapidly, together with the vigils he compelled me to observe.

Sleepless himself, he caused me to read to him through the watches of the night such books as he desired to sift or study minutely. Among these were works on atheism that made my blood creep coldly in my veins, and against which I deemed it my duty to protest, though ever in vain. Volumes filled with the dry chaff of the law and its endless technicalities and tautology; or compendiums of agriculture and stable management, to me insufferably dull and even repulsive. I considered this "lecture" my most terrific duty, and if such a word seems too strong, think of what it must be to be roused from healthy slumber, to undertake a task that wore away the night in dreary drudgery and enforced vigil by the side of one who slumbered at the sound of the voice, yet awoke, whenever it faltered, to command and curse.

The torture of Baron Trenck by Frederick was scarcely more inhuman or dictated by greater cruelty.

For services like these I received coarse food and still coarser clothing, and permission to sell all the fowls that I could raise, all the honey I could spare, all the wool that I could shear for my own benefit. Of neither of these privileges did I stoop to avail myself.

I was a captive but not a slave. I could do without luxuries where gold was plenty, but I would not aid his sordid spirit by pandering to its narrow cruelty.

It was my specialty to be a lady.

Aunt, do not misunderstand me. Had we been poor I could cheerfully have prepared our food and sheared our sheep with my own hands, nor dreamed that it derogated from my dignity. But we were enormously rich, and yet food and fires were luxuries so scantily dealt to me that the poorest villagers might have hesitated whether or not it would be to their advantage to change stations with Marie, Countess Cluche.

But more than all the enforced silence of my friends distressed and wore my spirits. I knew that all letters were intercepted. I had ceased to struggle against the cold and cruel hand that clutched my life-strings, and Madame Burgenheim and Mazon Rivers faded alike into visions of the past, never more, as it seemed to me then, to be realized.

The blind I knew were usually long-lived, and I made up my mind that my father would survive me, yet my prayers went up to heaven unceasingly for the softening of that stony heart before our parting.

His death occurred at last under the most painful circumstances. A stone chimney that he was causing to

be taken down at the end of a ruinous building, contrary to the advice of an architect, to be erected elsewhere, fell upon and crushed him almost to a mass of clay.

Blind as he was, he was endeavoring to assist in removing the stones, when it toppled and fell. He lived one day and night in strange alternations of great agony and perfect ease, and during his intervals of pain spoke to me in words that almost repaid my long and weary sacrifice.

It had been my habit while I read to him in his blindness, I remember, to shed streams of silent tears, which came to be my only luxury—one of which even he could not deprive me.

With a clear, unbroken voice I would read on, even while my eyes rained water on the pages beneath them, unobserved by him, as I thought, and I felt this strange style of weeping to be a relief and rest to my overtaxed brain and nerves.

“You will shed no more silent tears, Marie, when I am gone,” he said; “all will be yours! I used to smile to feel the pages of the books when you had left them, moist and warm. Then I said to myself, ‘She has a brave spirit, my little Marie; she knows how to govern herself at last.’ These are good lessons I am teaching her, she who never complains. She will know how to rule her domain as well, and also to obey her husband when she has one.

“There, child, marry whom thou wilt, so that he takes my name and treats thee well. Bring back Madame Burgenheim to assist in your counsels. She would not wed me; but I loved her well, notwithstanding.

“Thy fate has conquered mine. Yes, Marie, I yield—thou art in the ascendant now.”

It will be seen even by this extract that in that last dreadful day, by snatches, much of his life was revealed to me, so that I came to love him even in those brief and terrible hours of agony and separation, and to pray for the continuance of his broken life.

He died, and I found myself suddenly one of the richest heiresses in France. My first thought was of Madame Burgenheim, my next of Mazon Rivers, my third, dear aunt, of you.

I planned and executed then the little drama romance which, unfortunately as it has terminated in some respects, has, upon the whole, confirmed my happiness.

I was too sad, too solitary to seek that world in which I had found before but little to repay me; too fixed in the habit of my life to form new attachments, or meet the requisitions of persons of my own rank.

I had known one man of crystalline purity and transparency of soul—in that simple St. Germaine life of mine—and he had seemed to love me. But since then long years had intervened. I could not doubt, from what I knew of life, that the sheen of splendor would draw him to my side, should I openly summon him, and that he would bow before the coffers of the Countess Cluche, in the fashion of our land, whether or not he loved her. But we should never be equals if I did this, and I should never possess his true affections under such circumstances. For it is a belief of mine that no man truly loves the woman whom he woos as his superior.

It was in pursuit of truth and disinterestedness that I stooped to a disguise in which I could alone hope to test these qualities in him I loved and in the relations I sought to know and cherish.

I have not been wholly disappointed, and perhaps through what I have suffered only justly punished for my departure from the path of entire openness. My greatest regret is in that I have not suffered alone; but it is a law of our being, I believe, that this isolation of pain can never exist. We more or less by every act of ours draw in some fellow-creature.

Poor Mazon has been scorched in his path through the fiery furnace; nor have even you, dear aunt, escaped unscathed; and, for my own part, my pilgrim soles have been burnt to a crisp.

But we shall all recover, and be better and wiser for our cruel experience, and for this let us be thankful and devout.

Farewell, and when you come to France make your home at "Les Hirondelles," with your repentant and attached niece,

MARIE, COUNTESS CLUCHE.

An explanation.

My companion Bedouin at your feast of roses was none other than Madame Burgenheim. The picture I sent you was one of two miniatures of my mother, which I know for such knowledge you will prize the more.

There is none extant of my sister, who is said to have greatly resembled yours; so that I referred you conscientiously to the portrait on ivory for a just idea of her appearance, far better than any words of mine could give. I unfortunately have none of the "personnel" of my mother's family.

The letters you received from France were written by Madame Burgenheim at my request. You will recog-

nize in this the chirography of Marie Minande. "Que vous dis eternellement." Adieu.

The box to Dr. Mandamus, of which mention has been made, arrived at last, and contained—not a pair of slippers, or dragees, or white mice—one or the other of which he had securely promised himself—the first as characteristic of women generally, the last of French women particularly; but, to his surprise and almost dismay (for he was not addicted to receiving handsome presents), he found within a superb lepine watch, with a heavy gold guard chain of finest workmanship, and diamond slide, in the fashion of that day.

A little note, explanatory of the cause and appropriateness of the gift, lay modestly ensconced in the bottom of the box containing this offering of gratitude and esteem, which we also subjoin. It was in the writing of Mademoiselle:

Will Dr. Mandamus accept, instead of the little uncouth ring he coveted (deeming it wholly valueless), as a memorial of one apparently obscure and wretched, the accompanying emblem of an old and powerful race?

MARIE, COUNTESS CLUCHE.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## LES HIRONDELLES.

This castle hath a pleasant seat—the air  
Smells wooingly here.—MACBETH.

She's made of those rare elements that now and then appear,  
As if removed by accident from some far-distant sphere,  
Forever reaching up and on to life's sublimer things,  
As if she had been used to track the universe with wings.

N. P. WILLIS.

**H**ALF-WAY down to the low-sloping mountain, crowned with chestnut trees, at the foot of which lay fair meadows intersected by a rapid stream, tributary to the Rhone, was suspended the "Swallow's Nest," as it had been once called, probably from the style of its defences,\* simply now the "chateau," entitled "Les Hironnelles."

Yet, in truth, some attributes of the bird to which it owed its name originally seemed to have clung persistently to its occupants and owners, from the time of the first Count Cluche, the clockmaker of Charlemagne, who founded the dynasty, and built the gray watch-tower (buttressed and moated as this once had been), to the later lords, who had added in succession and in accordance with the tastes of the successive periods of their possession, stately hall, pointed turret, spacious gallery or encircling corridor.

Like the swallow which appeared on their crest, the "Cluche" characteristics were those of external plain-

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\* "Le nid," described by Scott in *Quentin Durward*, consisted of cradles of iron for the defence of those who shot from the walls. These were called swallows' nests.

ness and want of all those gifts that lend amenity to the manner and mind of man. Yet there was a grim domesticity of nature, so to speak, varied by periods of mysterious and sudden migration which seemed to be the one safety-valve required by their otherwise monotonous and constant natures. We have seen something of this in Mademoiselle!

It was from their mother, a woman of rare gifts and ardent sensibility, that the two sisters, one of whom we have known as Mademoiselle Minande, received the moulding of their fine and feminine natures and their artistic capabilities.

Wonderful are the effects of this foreign grafting on old and stagnant races! New qualities are thus introduced into effete families—fresh faces and quick energies that blend well with the stern sameness of the original stock—grafts that bear on old scions rich fulness of fruit and blossom, and give fine impulse to a new dynasty.

I can but think that noble results are yet to ensue from the mingling of our free transatlantic blood with that of the old families of Europe, and it is just possible that the seeds of liberty may in this wise be transmitted from land to land—from generation to generation, as the bird now scatters those of fruits and flowers in her yearly flight.

It was just seven years after the “feast of roses,” in the same bland month of June, that had witnessed the celebration of and singular developments resulting from the little festival at Birk-braes, that again some of its principal performers found themselves assembled by invitation in the salon of the ancient chateau of Les Hironnelles, the abode of the Count and Countess Cluche.

On the particular occasion of which we speak, a balmy



evening in the sweetest of summer months, the hostess occupied a fauteuil in the deep bay window that looked upon the broad, green, level lawn, with its choice and well-kept shrubberies, its occasional parterres and terraces, its guardian statues and stately marble urns, and, above all, with that central feature which gave its chief life to the scene, the grand fountain of "Arethusa," commemorative of the Greek legend, and in itself a work of art that could scarcely, in its line, be excelled, either in France or Italy. A group of joyous children, three of whom were her own, zealously guarded by their white-aproned and white-capped "bonnes," were playing by the water-side, and for a time the interest of the mother was concentrated on the scene in which they bore a part. As she gazed two forms came between her vision and the fountain of Arethusa, with its fairy surroundings; its swans that sheltered in a little cove of their own, were thus undisturbed by the plashing of the falling column of waters; and came tamely to be fed by the hands of visitors; its piles of tinted and twisted shells, and its marble nymphs, disporting at the edge of the basin, while the central figures (from which the fountain took its name) seemed merging into mist and stretching forth hands of entreaty and sad farewell to the young companions, unable to avert her doom.

As she saw the forms referred to sauntering across the sward that obscured her children for a moment from her fond, maternal eyes, a smile of dimpled sweetness broke over the placid face of the lady and rose to her purple eyes, and she waved her hand towards them in token of welcoming recognition.

They were those of her husband and the Marquis of

Rousillon, their nearest neighbor, who had succeeded to the heritage of his cousin and hers—Raoul Delmar—and who had formed a close intimacy with him we once knew as “Mazeron Rivers”—now the “Count Cluche,” by the grace of the Emperor.

For these were the palmy days of the Second Empire, before the cruel mistake of Mexico had been made—so soon to hurl a just retribution on the head of its perpetrator—and while still the flattered aristocracy of France believed and delighted in the charlatan of their court, and esteemed him great enough to confer and even create greatness.

Nor had the people then risen grimly to their feet to resent the drain of the blood and treasure of the provinces to promote the progress of Paris alone, the petted child of prosperity, and to rend the chains of their bondage—let us hope forever! Surely a great consistency is visible through the apparent inconsistency of this race, as the fraying of the woof will reveal the true texture of the warp beneath. From the time of Charlemagne to that of Louis the Sixteenth they were content to eat gray lentils and black bread in a land of plenty, and to rest in ignorance.

The philosophers and prophets of those latter days of Louis enlightened them, and they demanded and obtained their rights, so long withheld—they became republicans and freemen. Three times since then have they been cajoled through the glamour of revolution into surrendering these hardly-earned rights, and each time have they waded through a sea of blood to rescue and hold them again. They will forfeit all claim to the sympathy of the world if they surrender them now,

in the face of such effort, such experience. They are republicans or nothing from this hour.

While we are digressing the two gentlemen are ascending the marble steps that lead to the bay window of the "salon" from the lawn beneath, and now they stand in their graceful and still youthful manhood on the platform at the summit of the ascent before the chair of the lady—so lovely in her graceful matronhood—the Countess Cluche—the master and his guest each bearing unmistakably, though severally, the stamp of rank and distinction.

Times were changed, since Mademoiselle Minandé mended the torn blouse of her lover, and he writhed under the consciousness of poverty and "Bohemianism," and the supercilious politeness of the guests at Birk-braes. Confident of wealth, position, and above all of the devoted affection of his wife, at peace with his own conscience and leading an easy and simple life, all that there was in him, of courtly grace and affable sweetness, had been developed into something of refinement, rare even in the atmosphere of courts. For with him politeness sprang from the heart, *not* from circumstances and conventionalities alone.

Something sterner and stronger characterized the manner, the physiognomy of M. de Rousillon. Younger by several years than Mazon, he looked even older, so much more deep and thoughtful was the expression of his features, so much more restrained and dignified were his movements. He had not the charm for strangers of the Count Cluche, endowed with "the fatal gift of familiarity"—as the elder Mirabeau said of his irresistible son—a fascination few resist, since it extends alike to rich

and poor, and appeals to the most prominent trait of human nature, "amour propre."

But those who knew M. de Rousillon best loved him most; and this is the highest encomium any man can receive, when we consider it in its true bearings. He was by birth noble on one side only. His mother was a Delmar, but his father had been a manufacturer of artillery a "mitrailleus," ennobled by the Emperor as a reward for his genius and invention, and perhaps in compliment as well to his enormous wealth. When the decayed estate of Raoul Delmar fell to him, as the last of the family, he received it rather as an encumbrance perpetuated by his pride of race, than as a source of emolument or even of enjoyment. He had been placed early in the army, and had risen to the rank of Major through his own bravery in the Crimea; but on the death of his father he had found it necessary to resign his commission, in order to devote all of his energies to the management of a vast and complicated estate, which devolved on him as the eldest of a numerous family.

Five years of arduous toil had enabled him to place his mother, sisters and young brother in such a condition of safe prosperity as to permit his withdrawal from their affairs, and to afford him temporary rest from labor. His health had partially yielded under the strain of effort and responsibility, and he came to his neglected property in Provence to recuperate his energies for the fresh battle of existence.

Insensibly, the tranquil charm of rural life, and its daily requisitions (none of them wearing or wasting, since they consisted simply in the improvement of grounds and buildings, amelioration of the condition of the renters of

the arable land, many of them tenants of wretched hovels, when he came suddenly in their midst like a good genius) won on his fancy, and renewed his health.

He made "Les Bocages" his residence, and left it rarely. Three months in Paris after Christmas and an occasional visit to his mother in Marseilles comprised the terms of his absence usually; but in the last year he had gone to the United States of America for a six months' tour, partly with a view of visiting the seat of war and judging for himself of the justice of the cause and the comparative strength of the opposing parties. During that comprehensive tour he had felt and thought profoundly, and at one time had almost determined to cast himself with his fortunes into the vortex of affairs in which he had no real interest. More prudential thoughts prevailed. Something even of doubt and disgust crept over him towards the last when he read motives more clearly, and he returned as he went, unfettered by the burden of partisanship, yet with his keenest sympathies alive for the people of the South. Perhaps even then some vague mutterings of the approaching storm that impended over his own beloved country had made themselves heard in the depths of his prophetic heart; and he reserved his choicest energies for France.

Unlike his neighbors—the Count and Countess Cluche—he was not by any means an uncompromising imperialist. The Emperor's course at Solferino, whither he had followed his fortunes, had alienated him greatly from the sovereign of his native land as man, as soldier; but, as monarch, his loyal heart still clung to him, even if in secret tribulation for his future.

Such was the man—such his brief history, rather—who, advancing from the marble balcony outside of the long window of the *salon*, now entered it and stood confronting his hostess, who rose to meet him, extending, as she did so, a hand of welcome—that hand accorded only in France to chosen friends.

“Mazeron Rivers,” as we still love to call him, lingered a moment longer at the entreaty of his children, who were being unwillingly borne away from the fountain by their nurses; for the sun was setting behind the chestnut groves of the mountains, and the call of the cowherds announced the presence of evening, and the hour for the simple supper of bread and new milk that awaited them in their nursery.

Then he, too, entered into the shadowed salon, beyond which the “*salle a’ manger*” was being arrayed and illuminated for the late dinner that crowned the social day, and already the folding doors were thrown open and the rich odors of fruits and flowers saluted the senses—“*en attendant*,” the feast.

The Countess Cluche had arisen to greet M. de Rousillon, and her trained dress of rich blue silk, trimmed with old and priceless lace, swept over the Aubuson carpet, and became her well, for it added to her height and dignity and set off the waxen pallor of her complexion. Thus standing, and thus dressed in her matured yet still slender and graceful matronhood she was certainly a far more beautiful woman than was Mademoiselle “Marie Minande,” weary, anxious and simply attired, at Birk-braes, seven years before. And yet something had vanished from that face, that form, that endeared them more to the fastidious observer than

than now—a yearning tenderness, an exquisite completeness of outline that maidenhood alone can possess, first youth attain.

We are cavilling now. Had not a perfect wifehood, a rich maternity come in their stead, a confidence in self and in life that arises only from experience and satisfied affection? Are not these things better than uncertainty and expectation, as far superior, in all utility and purpose of being, as the fruit is to the flower? Yet there are dreamers, we reply, who, holding the ripe apple in their hand, look back to the time of the May-blossom with fond regret, and sigh for its delicate perfume merged in fruit! Haply, it is my misfortune to be one of these.

Perhaps it would have been wisest to have left the picture of Marie Minande just as it stood, and trusted to its suggestiveness and the imagination of the reader for its completion. But would this have been wholly just to the actors in this little life-drama who ventured much in allying two natures so opposite, two lives so strongly contrasted? Some of the worldly wise might have prophesied, with seeming justice, discontent, coldness, and even positive alienation from such an alliance. Others might have supposed all affection to abide as it commenced, on one side, and the tyranny of a spoiled idol, on the opposite hand, to develop after a time into unbearable caprice and oppression. It is our duty to portray the truth and show how finely in this instance had been struck that “*juste milieu*,” which is the perfection, nay, the poetry of common sense.

But the dinner waits, and M. de Rousillon leads in the lovely lady in deep mourning, to whom he has just been introduced by the Countess Cluche as “my cousin,

Mrs. Montrose, the daughter of my American aunt, Mrs. Thermor."

The master has handed to her seat Madame Burgenheim, a resident beneath his roof, to whom he always offers filial attentions. The Countess Cluche has preceded every one, with her dear old friend, then on his half-yearly visit to Dauphiny, the Bishop Duprez, later the martyr of the Commune, and perhaps of all the faces at the board his is the most striking. Lionel Blamire has convoyed carefully the aged Marquise de Centrefeuille, first cousin of the ancient Count Leon Cluche, and, like him, threatened with total blindness, and already groping her way on a slender staff of ebony, surmounted with a silver introverted hand, into which she places her own attenuated claw confidingly; a strange old figure, wrapped about, as in weird sepulchral ceremonies of black velvet and antique lace, with here and there a gleam of starlike diamonds in her capped and palsied head, and on her narrow and deeply-draped bosom. The mummy at the feast, she might be termed.

This venerable hideosity occupied the post of honor, and sat at the right hand of her cousin, who bore with perfect equanimity her annual visitations, yet heaved a sigh of private and profound relief when they were ended. For not only had this ancient dame partaken—though from a different cause—of the optical malady of her cousin, but with it all of the parsimony, severity, and sarcasm that seemed to have descended lineally from the clockmaker of Charlemagne through a dozen generations, tempered in the case of Marie Minande by the milky nature of her mother and the race from which she sprang, the love-eyed and sweet-voiced Ruffins! Blind



as she was, this aged Centrefeuille yet gathered elements of bitterness and satire wherever she turned her guiding cane—her “witch’s wand” as the new “Count Cluche” ventured to call it—and her Voltaire dart was ever on the string.

We are a long time assembling our guests of the dinner-table around the board, where china and glass—each beautiful of its kind—wine in decanters, placed at intervals, vases of fruits and flowers, and rare confections, make all the visible array on the rich damask cloth, for already the “*diner a la Russe*” has made its innovations on the old-fashioned provincial style of meats canned by the master and vegetables undermined by the assault of levelling spoons under the direction of the mistress, until after the work of a few minutes chaos seemed renewed before convivial eyes!

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley come in together, as is their custom, for the injury to the right wrist of the husband renders the aid of his wife essential to his “bien-etre,” whether at toilet, desk, or meal. They make no apologies, the whole thing being understood by their host, and seem as entirely absorbed with each other as though they had newly met, and had fresh discoveries to make as to ideas and intellect. Miss Constance Lindsay too is there, stronger, and even younger-looking than when we saw her a fragile, hopeless invalid at Birk-braes, for she has now the orphaned children of her niece, Clara Blamire, to love and care for, and a stake in life seems again entered for her by a bereavement which cost her dear, and yet which leaves behind it consolations. It has been three years since the sword wore through the sheath in Clara Lindsay’s case; since the petulant, fitful, dis-

contented spirit of the spoiled beauty penetrated and destroyed its waxen case; three years, and Lionel Blamire has mourned her sincerely, who was at once his torment and his idol. Now there is a sudden reillumination of faded hopes in his manly bosom, for since he came to "Les Hirondelles" with his children and their aunt for a season, in compliance with the invitation of the Count and Countess Cluche, he has renewed his acquaintance with his sweet young and now widowed cousin Genie, and learned in his own despite to love her yet better than he has ever loved before.

Is this love returned or destined to disappointment? He is yet to see. No sign has yet been vouchsafed him, after the attentions of many weeks, that could with any justice encourage him to hope for felicity, and yet until to-day his spirit had never been greatly disturbed with regard to the result of his devotion. Valuing himself dispassionately, he knew that he possessed as many of the elements of success as most men of his age and rank. He was, to begin with, better-looking than ordinary men; his abilities were excellent, if not first-rate; his manners unmistakably those of a gentleman; and in accordance with the old French legend of his race, "*Faire valoir, vaut bien gloire,*"\* for confidence was awakened in the breast of all who met him, even for the first time. He was gentle and brave, usually forbearing yet firm, and, withal, gifted with much of this world's lucre, for his estates in Scotland were productive and well managed, and his expenditures moderate, so that he always had a "balance at his banker's," that desideratum to all real

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\* To be esteemed is better than to be famous.

independence. For the rest, he loved farming, reading, hunting, and fishing, and never found leisure a burden or productive of care, for his soul was at rest.

This evening, however, as I have said, his estimate of the safe adjustment of his destiny, which before he had confided trustfully to the hand of fate, had been disturbed woefully, and his looks betrayed him.

"Something has gone wrong with Lionel, I fear," said Miss Lindsay, in low tones, to Colonel Kavanaugh (who had run down from Paris—where he and the Ravenshaws were temporarily residing to make an ostensible visit to the Cluche family—a real one to his darling, Genie Montrose and her two-year old boy, his godson). It may be remembered that Lionel Blamire was a relative of his, as of Mr. Thermor's, and the best relations had ever existed between them.

"Wrong with Lionel? What can it be then? He is not ill, surely; has he heard bad news from home? Has the lake levee burst again, or what?" I need not say that the response to Miss Lindsay's observation was made in a voice as inaudible to those around her as her own remark had been—a sort of grumbling bass accompaniment to the high-pitched general conversational key.

"I know him so well that I am quick to see when he is discomfited; I cannot be mistaken," she said.

"Have these people been doing anything especially disagreeable to him? There is no relying on foreigners, you know, beyond the moment."

"Oh, nothing. They are perfectly well-bred. Be very careful, I beg, Colonel Kavanaugh, how you hazard such observations. She has the ear of a mole, and he the eye of a lynx."

“Ah, I comprehend. Early vigilance necessary; habit once acquired never abandoned. You may pet and pamper a mouser forever, yet if there is a scratching behind the wainscot, off she goes. Æsop knew that. Typical only; no offence intended anywhere, of course. But what do you suppose ails Lionel? There is a cloud, and he keeps his eyes averted.”

“From us, only, Colonel Kavanaugh. See with what eager, if suppressed scrutiny, he regards his vis-a-vis, listening, evidently, to their ‘entre-tien.’ That is not very well-bred, by-the-by, in our usually fastidious Lionel. Something unusual in his nature, which is rather of the incurious Indian chief order.”

“Who are they?” asked Colonel Kavanaugh, advancing his bald head so as to look beyond the pretty, provincial French girl and her Parisian lover, who obscured, with their full coiffures, both ringletted and puffed to perfection, the guests beyond them from his end of the table.

“Upon my word,” falling back listlessly, “none other than Genie and the Monsieur Rousse; we came over with him from New York three months ago, just before McClellan’s defeat in the Peninsula. I remember, for we hazarded a little bet on that strategic movement of his, in which I had confidence, and the Frenchman was the winner. I paid the cigars right gladly when we arrived at Havre, and had a glimpse of the cable despatches, but I must say he didn’t want to take them. You see, his judgment was on the right side, as was my heart.”

“Where the hand ought to have been as well,” murmured Miss Lindsay, flushing slightly at her own re-

mark, for she knew how sore Major Kavanaugh was on this subject.

"Come, come, Constance Lindsay! no side thrusts. When a man has been in the army forty years, all he can do is to resign when the question is whether to support or forsake the old flag! Ravenshaw thought so too, you know, and here we are in consequence expatriated! God knows, I had rather be in the thickest of the fray than rusting out in that shallow, empty Paris city, were not my conscience in the way."

"It is a roaring lion, no doubt," she said good-humoredly, "but in truth, Colonel Kavanaugh, I was not thinking of aught beyond my subject of remark. What did the Frenchman want over there at such a time, if *not* to espouse one cause or the other? Such impertinent curiosity!"

"Did you never hear of one Parrhasius?"

"What! that dreadful old piece by N. P. Willis that every schoolboy used to take a turn at?"

"Certainly, but I never could bear it, never!"

"Well, he wanted to see muscle and nerve exhibited in the struggle of agony, so that he might paint it, in his own way, by writing articles for the Parisian papers. That is my idea, at least."

"Or perhaps he meant to speculate in property. Who knows? It is very cheap just now!" and she drew a heartfelt sigh. "My rents are next to nothing in Baltimore; they scarcely cover outlay."

"It is well you have some British stocks, then, to fall back on," said her interlocutor dryly. "As for us, we are positively ruined. My tobacco estate scarcely keeps the worms alive that prey upon the leaves, and the

negroes are a positive burden to support. But there is one comfort—it is a burden that will not trouble us long, and the end of it is I shall be an almoner, in my old age, on the Ravenshaws or Genie Montrose. Well, ‘sufficient to the day,’ etc. A glass of pale sherry with you, Miss Constance. I abhor these sour foreign wines.” And he held his glass to be filled. Then, raising it between him and the light, after a fashion he had, bowed into empty space and drank.

In the meantime a little by-play was going on between Genie Montrose, and her newly introduced acquaintance, in whom she recognized the “Monsieur Rousse,” who had been a fellow-passenger three months before with Colonel Kavanaugh and herself, when she crossed the Atlantic to join her mother at Paris, whither she had lately smuggled her boys for fear they would go into one of the conflicting armies and be lost to her forever.

Fortunately Major Ravenshaw’s revenue was not dependent on the contingencies that governed property—either North or South—but was derived from inexhaustible and, as long as he remained neutral, inalienable resources in the far West—mines of enormous value. He had resigned his commission before he addressed Mrs. Thermor, and, like Colonel Kavanaugh, could neither bear to fight against his old brethren in arms or his native State, for both of these gentlemen were Marylanders. They dulled their feelings as well as they could to the deep inner voice of maternity—crying on her sons to come to the rescue—and at last, in one case, the mightier instinct prevailed, even if too late to do more than aid in the death-struggle of the long-forsaken mother, vanquished by her foes.

As soon as they were comfortably seated at the table, Mrs. Montrose had avowed her recognition of her "*compagnon de voyage*," whom she had known only until now, by hearing him addressed on the ship, at table and on deck, as "*Mister Rousse*."

Then he explained that there was no mystery intended by this abbreviation, which had been made by the captain in the course of an early introduction from sheer inability to recall his three-syllabled name. He had suffered the mistake to pass, the name to stand, and was glad to be relieved of the onerous weight of an unprofitable title by means of the captain's error, especially as the cabin was filled with Americans, who might not otherwise have found him so congenial as they seemed to do—divested of his lofty name.

"But you know we are accused of tuft hunting in our country," said Genie, archly. "Your title and name at length might have brought you many worshippers of both sexes in the ship '*Bousillon*.' It is one of Shakespeare's names," she murmured. "You know it occurs in '*Measure for Measure*,' and always recurs to the mind with '*the lonely moated grange*,' that Tennyson has embalmed in his lovely poem. You know it, of course?"

"I am ashamed to say I do not! It proves me completely a Frenchman that English poetry has little charm for me *inside* of blank verse. That, you know, is only prose, with a rise and fall at certain intervals. I like the *Idylls of the King*, '*par exemple*;' but the minor poems less. You know our language does not permit of blank verse in its very moulding. Rhymes we have abundantly. Do you read Lamartine?"

"Oh, yes! and with some appreciation, I believe. I

think he is the only French poet worthy of the name. I have translated one of his poems into English verse," with a faint flush of the transparent cheek, "and the Countess Cluche thinks well of my effort. I did it as a sort of exercise."

"I should like to see your translation," he said, gently. "You are in some sort a poet, then? Of course you write verses in your own language as well?"

"Sometimes; but they are of little worth. Yet I found it a resource, in times of loneliness and dejection, to exercise my little faculty. I have used my pen only as a means of consolation and outlet—a sort of safety-valve for feeling."

"Ah! but this is an exquisite revelation! I might have known from the expression of your face that poetry had its temple in your soul. I marked this possibility before I knew you."

"I am sorry I have been so impulsive as to lay bare my little gift to which I attach no more importance than to any minor accomplishment I possess. I do not consider myself a poet at all, only *poetical*. They are very different, you know."

"Different," he answered, vaguely, "yet the same! Different as brooks and lakes are different, the one being the source, the other the reservoir for its clear waters to accumulate and abide in, yet both are of the self-same element, only subjective and objective severally."

"I do not think I understand you clearly."

"Nor do I understand myself sufficiently well to explain my meaning. I *think*, however, yours must be the mountain brook nature rather than that of the tarn. I do not care much for still waters."



"Yet the water lilies love best the tranquil pool. I believe I love them best of all flowers," she added impulsively. "There is such repose about them. They seem so slumberous. The winds have so little power to break their ranks, their rest. If I could believe in Darwinism, this new theory so abhorrent to my soul, I should think I had been a water lily once myself. They touch and move me so."

"You remind me more of a tea rose, a Madame Bosanquet, par exemple, waving to every breeze, and blowing sweet odors all around and about you. Of course you cannot help your universality," and he smiled his strange, sad, sweet, and half derisive smile, while her cheek flushed faintly, and her clear eyes were lowered beneath his gaze. "She never looked that way in conversation with me in her life," thought Lionel Blamire, passionately, "and this man is no stranger to her, I know, from some passing words that caught my ear inadvertently. Can it be possible that her love for this foreigner has been at the root of her indifference to me?"

"Bien ouir c'est bien dire," whispered the old purblind lady, provokingly, at his side. "Vous econtez bien, Monsieur! Vous ne m'avez pas dit un mot depuis que nous y sommes! Qu'avez vous donc au jour d'hui, Monsieur Leon?"

"Je me trouve, un pen souffrant, Madame, c'est tout," he replied, carelessly. "La bise, m'a fait mal—hier au soir"—he added, gayly, with a sudden effort, pouring into her glass the ruby Burgundy from the decanter before them, and placing it carefully within her grasp. "Votre sante, Madame, and success to the Southern

arms," and as he spoke he bowed across the table to Genie.

"Thank you, cousin Lionel," she answered quickly, and graciously raising her glass as she spoke to her lips, filled with Sauterne. "You, too, M. de Rousillon, will pledge our brave Southerners, will you not?" she added, pausing with her untasted draught still poised in her slight fingers, while he filled his goblet with the same light wine, and prepared to quaff it to the honor and glory of distant Maryland.

"Now we will drink," said Genie, solemnly, after repeating the pledge, as did each of the remaining visitors in turn.

"But, after all," she murmured, "would it not be better to wait a while, and pour the libation on our liberated soil? for of course there can be but one result in accordance with the eternal justice of God."

"Which we have no right to question," said Lionel Blamire, reverently.

"Which we have no power to penetrate," added de Rousillon.

"Why even the nations will be brought to a sense of their duty, when they see the strong overpowering the weak," urged Genie, eagerly.

"Not while slavery remains a Southern institution," said Lionel Blamire, seriously. "England dares not go behind her own traditions."

"But France, noble France, is with us, and will lend us a hand again, as she did our fathers, to throw off tyranny!" exclaimed Genie, passionately. "The emperor is our friend."

"He is not even his own," said de Rousillon, mourn-

fully. "He can, he will do nothing for a sinking cause. The South must yield to the power of circumstances. She is as a serpent surrounded with flames. The end is certain."

"And yet you bet against McClellan with Colonel Kavanaugh," Genie remonstrated. "Have you changed your mind, Marquis de Rousillon?"

There was such a lofty fervor in her manner that it half amused him. "No," he said, "no; the South will achieve many a victory, fight many a good fight yet; but you know the old fable of the fox surrounded with flies in a marsh. It applies to your struggling country. Drive off one army, another will appear. When the Southern men are decimated they cannot be renewed, and the age of demi-gods seems to be over. Heroes, even, are no longer immortal, and defeat is only the matter of time; yet it is a glorious strife, and all the more so for the hopelessness that surrounds it."

His words struck sad conviction to Genie's heart. She turned pale and trembled.

"What a Mimosa you are," he whispered.

"And what an ill prophet are you," she rejoined, with something like a gleam of displeasure on her soft features.

"No one has a right to prophesy such pain to another," said Lionel Blamire, fiercely. "It is not courteous; it is not even *gentlemanly*."

The last word hung suspended for a moment on the lip of the speaker, but was brought forth clear and vibrant after the interchange of one speaking glance between his adversary and himself, for such Lionel Blamire had from the beginning of the dinner chosen to consider De Rousillon.

"That is a mere matter of opinion," said the Frenchman, bowing low; "but every true man is found ready to sustain his opinions in this land, either by force of reason or of—arms."

"I prefer the latter alternative sometimes," said Blamire, haughtily.

"It is not always a matter of choice," responded De Rousillon. "*Au revoir*, Monsieur," and he smiled and drank his wine, without an indication of deeper displeasure than his careless words revealed.

Lionel Blamire, on the contrary, was evidently ruffled and angry; a red spot rose to either cheek, and his blue eyes flashed; his lips were closely compressed, and when he spoke again to the old French lady his voice was husky and low.

Of this Genie saw nothing, absorbed as she was in her companion, who was reminding her of a moment of peril to her boy on shipboard, which he had witnessed, and with some others averted.

"It was more difficult," he said, "to secure the ape properly than if he had been an armed man; he was so lithe, so vigorous; yet had he succeeded in his endeavors, your boy must have been borne to the mast-head in five minutes more, and perhaps cast on the waves. What was amusing and piteous at the same time, the child, who had made friends with Jocko through the bars of his cage, hitherto, seemed perfectly willing to be carried away. He was not at all afraid. '*Mais c'est un petit heros!*'"

"There are many breeds of monkeys," said Lionel Blamire, again accosting Genie across the table: "and those that are domesticated are frequently the most

dangerous; even if apparently harmless. It is a perfidious animal, ever," and he laughed.

"I believe you are right," replied Genie, with simplicity.

De Rousillon was silent, but he frowned.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

This son and heir then of the "Cannoneer,"  
Of spirit French and critical and cold,  
With answerable gush, his mother's gift—  
Such mixture makes a battle in the brain.

\* \* \* \* \*

The tactics of the two are different.

BROWNING—"Tower and Turf."

The idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,  
Into his study of imagination.—SHAKESPEARE.

THE Countess Cluche, on either hand of whom the guests were placed, whose metaphorical "pass-at-arms" we have recorded, comprehended the situation perfectly when she gave the signal to rise from table and adjourn to the now brilliantly-lighted "salon." It is not, we know, the custom in France for gentlemen to linger over their wine after the ladies have withdrawn, as in England, or the consequences of the strange state of mind into which Blamire had worked himself might have been instantaneous and even disastrous.

As it was, circumstances postponed any development of the embryo quarrel for several days—nay, weeks—during which Blamire lay ill at "Les Hirondelles" with sudden fever, developed into violent illness on the morning

after the conversation we have related. It was natural to suppose that, with convalescence, reason and the sense of the insult he had offered would return with a wish to extenuate it; and in this thought his hosts took comfort.

As for Genie, though strangely agitated at what had passed—at the moment of its occurrence—she shaped to herself no more result than that of temporary alienation between two friends, whom she respected and admired severally, and as she then believed, equally.

As to loving either of these agreeable men, no thought of this nature had once intruded itself, even casually, on her innocent mind—not even alive to possibilities of this sort, for so far her widowhood had engrossed her.

Rousillon could scarcely take in the circumstances of the case so as to comprehend the grievance of the Scotchman, even though he had read his passion at a glance. Surely, so far it had met with no opposition through his means, and even if after a time this fair and enchanting woman were to become an object of controversy between those two, would it not be for her alone to decide the question? What need of anger or irritation on such a subject? Why should personality enter into the honorable effort to obtain so rich a meed? or the conqueror become an object of spite and envy to the vanquished? A noble emulation might surely exist in the nineteenth century between two candidates for a lady's hand! It was only that barbarism that was akin to the animal, that made human beings abhorrent to one another when the love and possession of a woman was the stake between them. As well fight about the direction of the ever-shifting wind as imperil life and honor for a truant female fancy.

Thus thought, thus reasoned, our young philosopher—the master now of his own passions, of himself; with a spirit toned down by effort and reflection, and a mind shaped by science far more than art. Alas! how often does this outward crust of polished cement, apparently as hard as stone itself, yield suddenly to the volcanic pressure from within! There was nothing of this kind overlaying the simpler and more direct nature of Blamire. He was a man of strong feelings, but they lay near the surface, and his culture was of a kind that interfered not with their manifestation.

We can scarcely conceive of an excitable astronomer or meteorologist; but a farmer or physician, alive to common surroundings, or even a sculptor and painter, manipulating the material of their work, would not be placed in a sphere beyond human infirmities. Blamire entered very ardently into everything about him, from his dog-kennels and stables up to his mansion and family, and lived the true mortal life, not devoid of irritability, familiar to most good and happy men.

Rousillon had been so far the slave of duty and circumstances alone, not affection. He had stood, in his intervals of leisure, and looked at life with folded arms and cool, calm scrutiny—holding himself apart from men and their passions. He had loved deeply, when very young, a woman older than himself, who deceived him, as she had done her own husband before, and who had left a scar on his soul, as he sometimes thought (so bitter was this experience), that no after affection could ever efface. It was rather a smear on her own sex that remained—her fatal legacy—to the heart she had toyed with and almost destroyed, as recklessly as a cat sports

with the doomed traditional mouse—this woman, whom, meeting after an interval of years, Rousillon gazed upon with horror as at her surroundings, and with wonder at his own early infatuation.

She has nothing to do with this history and her name would be irrelevant here, but it was perhaps the very contrast afforded to her in every respect that drew the young Frenchman so irresistibly from the very first hour of their acquaintance, nay, even before its commencement, into the charmed atmosphere of “bonny Genie Montrose.” This was an appellation that her Scottish kinsman had bestowed on her when his near friend and neighbor, the young Laird of Rookhurst, had first borne home his fair American bride to his ancestral halls in the lowlands of Scotland.

An accident in hunting had cut off the life of the fond, yet never very congenial, husband, and for a time Genie was inconsolable; but youth and health sustained her well in the task of recuperation, and she was happy again in the possession of her infant son, her friends, and her own loveliness both of character and person—nay, in the very isolation of her position. Her estate supplied her simple wants; but most of her husband’s property was entailed on and even sequestered by his guardian for their son Malcolm until the time of his majority. In the meantime Genie had a right to reside at Rookhurst, with its young heir, but the place was singularly distasteful to her after her husband’s death, and she had returned to Birk-braes, preferring, so far, to dwell principally with her mother and step-father and their two young and lovely children, in her widowed condition, but reserving always the right of liberty with which her



bereavement had endowed her, as the sole compensation for her cruel loss. She went, she came, free as the breezes she seemed to bear about her, to and from her old home on the Chesapeake, and the mild tyranny that Major Ravenshaw exercised habitually over all who surrounded him failed utterly in her case to find its usual submissive slave, for even the wilful Mrs. Thermor had succumbed to it entirely, and no longer disputed conjugal authority.

When Genie had made known her resolution to accept the invitation of the "Countess Cluche" for a summer's sojourn, and give to "Provence" the preference over Switzerland (whither the Ravenshaws intended to go for the hot months), nothing could surpass the annoyance her mother manifested.

"That woman, who has not even asked me to her castle save in a general way!—for you to clasp hands so openly with my covert enemy! What does it look like, Genie?"

"Your covert enemy, mamma? I cannot see for my life what you refer to. I know you objected to the way in which she disguised herself (like Caliph Haroun Al-raschid, you know), in order to find her level and win your affections on her merits solely, and I know you disapproved of her 'mesalliance,' as you considered it, with the young artist—now a Count of the empire, mamma, by the Emperor's fiat—but what were these but romantic foibles to say the most? and surely that letter you showed me explained and extenuated everything—that letter which you never noticed, mamma; and yet when the war broke out she thought of you at once and begged that you would take refuge with her,

should it be necessary to leave your country, and in any case use her castle as your head-quarters whenever you visited France! I think that was a great concession on her part."

"It amounted to nothing, absolutely, Genie, and you know it. In your case she has fixed the day and the hour, and the term of your sojourn even, extending only a deprecating wave of the hand to me: 'Tell your mamma and Major Ravenshaw I shall be happy to receive them also as my guests at their own time.'"

"I think I can see her as she wrote those words, with that "sourire fin" on her lips that Clara Lindsay used to rave about. Women always liked her better than men did, I remarked. She was fortunate so far; I was a victim to the opposite state of things."

And the happily married widow heaved a profound sigh, at which Genie laughed archly, turning away from the interview with an unshaken purpose.

"I must see her," she thought; "it is the one thing that may restore my peace of mind. She was always to my spirits like oil poured upon troubled waters. Circumstances have so far withheld me from her presence. Now I *will* go!"

And thus did Genie Montrose rush unconsciously upon her fate.

I have said that Lionel Blamire was attacked with illness suddenly and alarmingly on the day after his dinner experience with Genie and Rousillon, and that his condition for a while lulled the apprehensions and absorbed the attention of his hosts, and even of the guests at Les Hirondelles less interested in his welfare. Miss Lindsay and Genie Montrose were indefatigable, of course, in their

efforts to ameliorate his sufferings, but he allowed no one to nurse him except his own servant, an old and faithful retainer of his father's house, aided by Rosolio, the steward of the Count and Countess Cluche, with whom the reader is already acquainted.

Occasionally flowers and fruits would be brought to him by those who would fain have ministered to his sterner needs, had he permitted them to do so; but he manifested such unmistakable impatience during these brief visits that his physician was at last constrained to forbid the entrance into his darkened chamber of all save his venerable attendants, unwearying as these proved to be.

Days passed—weeks—before he was declared convalescent, and even then he could receive only his sister at intervals, setting up the plea of nervousness—for his seclusion, so unusual in patients “on the mend,” as good Dr. Mandamus termed this progressive condition, from the brink of the grave up again to life and strength.

In the meantime M. de Rousillon had called daily to inquire concerning the sick man; nor this alone. Genie Montrose found herself at last awaiting the expected summons to the “salon” with a beating heart, which day by day was borne to her with the card of the near neighbor of her host's, and which she obeyed as unresistingly as the toy swan follows the magnet around the basin in which he floats.

She had glided into this groove of habit—feeling—call it what you will—so unconsciously that it was some time before she realized that she was no longer mistress of her inclinations or even actions. One day she determined, when first suspicious of the real state of affairs, to refuse

to receive M. de Rousillon, and sent by the servant who bore his card a civil message of apology.

In the next moment she found herself rushing blindly from the apartment to forestall her herald, which she did to the amazement of the ceremonious servitor, who, entering to deliver the message he had been shaping in his brain on his way to the drawing-room so as to make it as grandiloquent as possible, saw the lady from whom the excuse had been transmitted quietly seated in a fauteuil, near the sofa occupied by the object of the message.

With a tact that might have done credit to a diplomatist, he stepped quietly across the room, with eyes fixed on vacancy, and adjusted the drapery of a curtain, just a little out of order, then disappeared ghostily through the open window it covered, smiling as he emerged therefrom in the consciousness of having complete possession of a lady's secret!

"Why did I come?" thought Genie, suddenly recalled by the appearance of the footman to a sense of her own inconsistency. "What brought me here? Oh! God, am I this man's slave? Is he a master magician, and I only his attendant Ariel? Have I at last encountered my Prospero?" And for a time she sat dazed and silent in the presence of him who was her fate!

Still no declaration of love had left his lips, and deeply as he fascinated her, the flattery of his manner was all that so far indicated what might or might not lurk beneath that calm and self-poised exterior of power and intellect and critical discernment.

Yet day by day he grew into her feelings, her inner life, until at last he permeated every thought, every motive, with that subtle sweetness, which is said even now

to exude from the walls of the Mosque of Saladin, the very mortar of which was mixed, according to tradition, with attar of roses, the only undying odor.

She loved him with all the strength, impassioned purity, and devotion of her true, deep nature, never before stirred to a consciousness of its own powers, even by the mighty yearnings of maternity. Widowed as she was, this was her first passion. Not his, as the reader knows; for the wild passion of his early manhood had reduced, as he believed, his heart to cinders, from which no fires could ever be lighted more. Unholy fires like those indeed, were, let us trust, extinct in his soul forever; but now for the first time, he too loved, as men and angels equally might love, deeply, purely, and disinterestedly.

At this crisis matters remained, when, suddenly, one day, and unexpectedly, while De Rousillon was a guest at "Les Hirondelles," Lionel Blamire, pale, stern, and convalescent, stalked into dinner!

The guests rose simultaneously at his approach, and left their untasted soup to cool, while they gathered about him with congratulations and courteous salutations, such as belong peculiarly to well-bred society, for, of course, much more is said than felt on such occasions, where a few words would suffice, and be less overwhelming.

But even these manifestations failed to unlock the set features of Blamire, or to produce a smile on his sad and faded face; for was not the Mordecai of his happiness seated at the gate, and could his heart rejoice, even though the shadow of death had been so mercifully lifted away under these exasperating circumstances?

He had not counted on the company of De Rousillon; had heard nothing of his marked attentions to Genie,

though receiving each day his complimentary card of inquiry as to his own condition (a courtesy which he resented as an impertinence), and the shock of his presence was more than he could well bear. Fortunately he was spared the ordeal of an exchange of courtesies with his self-elected foeman on this occasion, for De Rousillon contented himself with rising where he stood, napkin in hand, and bowing ceremoniously to the otherwise warmly-welcomed convalescent.

"I wish they had let me sneak back to my place without a word; I hate all this foreign kotooing on all occasions," thought the sturdy Scotchman, as he sat down at last, and bent low over his plate of vermicelli, to conceal his agitation.

Old Madame de Centrefeuille had departed during his illness, to visit a relative who lived in the Pyrenees, but not without leaving many messages of regard for "le cher Lionel," and to-day he found himself established next to Genie Montrose as he could have wished to be, but for the fatal vis-a-vis of De Rousillon, between whom and himself no single word was exchanged during a meal, that seemed to him the longest he had ever partaken of in his whole life.

There was nothing obvious to Blamire of the state of things pending between Genie and De Rousillon, as he sat surveying both by turns, though with less than his usual openness of glance. "Suppose it proves to be a chimera of my own brain after all," he thought; "why then I shall be so happy that I shall do what but for one thing I would lose no time in doing—apologize to the Frenchman for the rudeness of my behavior, of which it seems several persons were made sensible (for I

had this from the Countess Cluche herself, in one of those recent notes of hers, accompanying fruit and flowers and such like flummery). But if my suspicions prove correct, hang me if I apologize at all, and he may send in his 'au revoir' as soon as he pleases, and then it will be the old story over again—"Come on, Macduff."

While all these conflicting thoughts were passing through his brain, Genie Montrose was ministering in every possible way to the capricious tastes of a convalescent. Now it was a flower, selected from a vase. Now a choice bunch of cherries, or rare-ripe strawberries, tendered with delicate fingers and bewitching smiles; now a glass filled with Fontenac wine, so suitable for an invalid, or brimmed with invigorating Burgundy, of which she insisted he should partake freely, so as to get back his strength, adding to each draught a little improvised toast of "good wishes" for his return to health and strength and happiness. "For 'to be weak is to be miserable,' you know, cousin Lionel," she whispered, "as Milton has said."

"And sometimes to be strong equally so," he rejoined, with something like a low groan that stirred her with apprehensions of a sudden seizure of some sort, so that she commenced fanning him with all her might.

"You remind me in some way, Genie, when you fan so vigorously, of that Chinese widow Goldsmith tells of—in his 'Citizen of the World,' I believe—who fanned her husband's grave night and day that it might dry the sooner, so that she might marry again! It seems that this drying process was a necessity with that people before a second union could be contemplated, also a pious rite, so she united fidelity and expediency, as you are doing, Genie."

"What a strange speech, cousin Lionel, and how irrelevant!" she said, flushing slightly. "I shall have to send for Dr. LaRue again if you talk so wildly."

"No need, my child. But stop fanning me; it does but make me gasp and swallow the wrong way. I know you are glad I am better; I believe in you. Yes, I will drink your pledge"—and he bowed as he repeated it—"To a better understanding."

"You see, Genie, 'I go it blind,' as you Yankees say, for I can't see any particular point in this toast of yours."

"Nor does M. de Rousillon, yet he joins us in the pledge," she said, joyously. "It will be explained to both at a fitting season."

"By the sorceress who compounds the beverage?" asked Blamire, "and whose cup we drain without question or dissent?"

"By the angel who came to Ishmael," murmured De Rousillon, gazing at Genie, who only caught the meaning of his words.

"By a sweet little mortal peacemaker only," interposed the Countess Cluche, turning in the next moment to speak to the guest at her right hand, for the invalid, for whom an additional seat at the board had to be placed, was on her left, in the curve of the end of the table.

"Now it will all go well," she thought, "and this painful meeting that has been hanging over my head like a sword for the past six weeks is an augury of good! They will be reconciled, or, if not, the matter will pass into oblivion."

Yet how far she was mistaken is shown by the fact



that, on the next morning, the Marquis of St. Maure called formally on Mr. Blamire for an explanation and retraction of certain unpleasant remarks and references not perhaps perfectly comprehended by his principal, that gentleman having postponed his demand for satisfaction to this time on account of the severe illness of Mr. Blamire.

To this demand Blamire replied only by saying, that whatever he had remarked he was willing to abide by, and that circumstances had fully confirmed, since the occasion in question, the opinion he then only partially entertained and expressed of M. de Rousillon.

"There is then no reason," said M. St. Maure, "why I should not present to you the challenge with which I am intrusted, to be delivered or withheld, conditionally and according to my estimate of the state of the case. I consider myself compelled by your persistency to assume a belligerent attitude, which, believe me, Monsieur Blamire, I regret, not only on your account, but that of M. de Rousillon, essentially a man of peace."

So saying, with a suave bow, he placed in the angry, clutching fingers of Lionel Blamire the elegantly enveloped and sealed missive, bearing the arms of the Delmar family, and directed in a firm but unmistakably foreign hand. It ran briefly thus:

"LIONEL BLAMIRE, ESQ.:

"SIR:—I challenge you to meet me at your earliest convenience, with whatever arms you may select, that satisfaction may be afforded me for your unmerited remarks at the table of the Count and Countess Clûche on the 10th day of June. Your illness, from which I am

happy to learn that you have recovered, has so far protected you from my just indignation.

“With respect and consideration, yours,

“DE ROUSILLON.”

M. St. Maure could scarcely account for the rage that seemed to take possession of Blamire as he scribbled off his eager acceptance of this war-like invitation.

“He is still nervous from recent illness,” he thought, “irritable, as invalids ever are; but what in the world induced the man to behave as he did in the first instance, and prevents his conducting himself now like a man of breeding and self-command? I never saw hatred so clearly manifested in any face, and yet, ‘*ma fois*,’ it seems to me impossible that one could hate a man so noble, so courteous as De Rousillon from mere personal antagonism. I confess I am mystified.”

“Here is my answer,” said Blamire, rising abruptly and thrusting the missive into the calm, extended fingers of St. Maure. “We will fight with rifles, at thirty paces.”

“Mais, Monsieur, that is murderous; it cannot be thought of; it is against the code.”

“I am a stranger here,” responded Blamire, “and I bring my own code with me. I am the challenged party and have a right to choose.”

“That is indisputable, Monsieur,” said St. Maure, rising and buttoning his coat tightly, with an expression of disgust on his pale, aristocratic features that was perfectly unmistakable. “But none the less is this a very savage proceeding.”

And without further parley and with a slight touch

of his hat, which he put on firmly, he left the room, turning back, however, at the threshold to beg that the second of M. Blamire would call on him as soon as possible at "Les Bocages."

"I suppose Mazon Rivers will serve me on this occasion," said Blamire, carelessly. "If not, there is Colonel Kavanaugh. I will send some one—or—a—come alone—it matters little which. There are, you observe, no preliminaries."

"I observe," reiterated St. Maure, dryly, and he strode sternly from the chamber in which his blood had been stirred, by a man in a dressing-gown, as it had never been before.

"I could have sprung at his throat," he said in relating this interview afterward to a disinterested party, "and but for the sacredness of my errand I know I should have been betrayed into some outrageous expression of feeling. I never saw such dogged cruelty, such personal animosity, as that Scotchman exhibited."

There had occurred an episode between the dinner of the day before and the visit of M. St. Maure that accounted for much of the reckless bitterness of Blamire.

## CHAPTER XV.

Come into the garden, Maude.—TENNYSON.

Whereof the war came which he knew must be.

BROWNING—"Sandie's Society."

The evil spirit of a bitter love

And a revengeful heart had power upon thee.

BULWER—"Lady of Lyons."

"COME out to the fountain with me, Genie," said Lionel Blamire, appearing suddenly before the object of his address on the balcony that projected from the library window. "Arethusa is beautiful by moonlight, and as I grow stronger I want to feel the grass under my feet again. There is no sensation so life-giving."

"Would it not be imprudent for you to venture out at night in your present feeble condition, cousin Lionel? Think of the dew. I have a Shakespearian faith in the blistering power of night-dew."

"Yet you know what he says, Genie, of mercy, and how 'It droppeth like the gentle dew from heaven.' By-the-by, I shall soon have to prove the truth of that assertion. But don't come with me if you prefer being near the Frenchman."

"He left us an hour ago," said Genie, taking his proffered arm coldly. "Be just and accurate at least when you attribute motives to uncomprehended behavior."

"You will ask me next to be generous as well, Genie; scarce more difficult in some cases than to be just," and a suppressed groan, rather than sigh, left his pallid lips, wrung from the torture of his struggling heart.

"I have always been taught to esteem you generous, cousin Lionel—ay! almost to a fault."

"Oh! that was with money and the like; but when it comes to our heart's treasures—bah!"

"It would be hard to surrender these, of course."

"It would be *wrong*," he said, stopping suddenly and looking into her face; "that is, if one could choose; but fate is sometimes pitiless."

"You must not feel in that way. We cannot see into the wisdom of God's inscrutable decrees, but we must bear whatever burden or bereavement he lays upon us—ay! and with magnanimity, too, if we love *Him*."

"I am not speaking of such losses," he said, impatiently. "Life contains greater disappointments than death brings sometimes. I have never been so nearly desperate from any cause as the fear of losing you lately. Now you know all, Genie!"

"Cousin Lionel!" and her hand dropped from his supporting arm, "I am so sorry, so sorry. Oh! why did I never think of this before?" and tears, distinctly visible in the moonlight, settled over her pale and quivering cheeks.

"Genie, this night," he said, grasping her arm almost fiercely with his attenuated fingers, "you must give me an answer to a question I have hesitated, yet wished to ask you for many weeks. I love you as I never thought I could love—as surely I have never loved before. Can you return, even imperfectly, this affection? I ask no more. Will you belong to me, Genie, by the holy name of wife?"

Frightened by the passionate intenseness of his manner, his voice, his expression, she hesitated a moment

before replying, and vainly strove to relax his nervous grasp upon her wrist; then yielding passively to his tyrannic will, she stood silently before him with down-cast head and heaving bosom, while low sobs escaped her lips of mingled pity and indignation.

He mistook these signs, or converted them through the glamor of his passion into indications of reciprocated emotion, and suddenly dropping her hand, he fell before her on one knee and threw his arms wildly about her.

Bursting from his embrace, she gained the opposite side of the fountain before he could pursue her, and, in an agitated voice, commanded him to refrain from following her on her pathway to the house.

"I will send Malcolm to you instead, or Rosolio, cousin Lionel," she said; "for there has been some strange mistakes here, and you need them, or else you presume too far."

"Is there, then, no hope for me, Genie?" he cried, extending his arms toward her retreating form, and the clear, vibrant sound of her last words reached his ear as he stood rooted to the spot.

"I can never be more to you than I am now, Lionel Blamire. Farewell; forget this folly."

This little scene it was that determined the course pursued by the Scotchman on the following day with regard to the challenge of De Rousillon.

"One of us *shall* be killed," he thought, "and both may. Will Genie hate or love the survivor?"

Before this violent passion possessed him, to the exclusion of all other interests, Lionel Blamire had been an easy-tempered, forbearing, unsuspecting man, without any animosities, or strong friendships even, beyond his own

family, every member of which he had been devoted to in the several relations of son, brother, friend, husband, father, master. Captain Stanley had waited to see him out of danger before proceeding to the post in Gibraltar, to which he was assigned as commandant, and had known nothing of the quarrel pending between Blamire and De Rousillon. The husband and wife had gone before the denouement, and Blamire did not wish them recalled; but he spent the evening of the day on which he had received and accepted the Frenchman's challenge in writing to both, and recommended to their care his children—should they become orphans—of whom, jointly with Miss Lindsay, he constituted them guardians.

Colonel Kavanaugh had already been enlisted as his *unwilling* second—for soldier as he was and man of honor, his kinsman thought Blamire wholly in the wrong, and on this occasion frankly told him so—and now all that remained to do in life seemed done, save to bid farewell to those dearest to him.

To Genie he wrote, reproachfully, piteously even, a few passionate lines, blistered with his tears, to be given to her by Miss Lindsay, to whom they were enclosed, in case he should fall; his children he kissed in their sleep, without a sigh or a regret, so strangely was he rendered self-absorbed and morbid through the power of his hopeless attachment.

There was something of the Hamlet nature in Blamire despite his apparent common-place!

Not so, De Rousillon. Even the savage evidence afforded by the choice of weapons, and the distance assigned by his opponent, failed to move him to animosity against him. He had forborne to declare himself to Genie Mon-

trose until after this matter should be decided, but he would have been blind indeed not to have seen that the scales were weighted down in his direction, and this knowledge, and the insight he had obtained, through his love for her, into his own nature, made him compassionate his adversary.

Yet his sense of what was due to himself—to society even, according to his views—had made him resent the insults he had received in the only way pointed out by that code of honor that a Frenchman never dares to set aside, even though the law of the land be opposed to it.

He had earnestly hoped that Blamire might apologize for what seemed such wanton insult, occasioned perhaps by the fever in his veins (even then on the eve of prostrating him for weeks), when that fever should have spent its force and brought him back, nay, down, to a mood for consideration.

We have seen that in this estimate of affairs he had been disappointed. Life was more precious to him now than it had ever been before, with so fair a prospect of happiness beyond, such a new infusion of delight into its every-day surroundings, and he shrank from the probability of death as he had never dreamed his fearless soul could do.

St. Maure saw with astonishment the expression of his face as he read Blamire's acceptance of his challenge, and heard with amazement the words that broke irresistibly from his lips.

"I had confided in his retraction of his insinuations and epithets on"—he paused, and leaned his head upon his hand.

"Oh, you would not have sent the challenge?" said



St. Maure, sternly. "Is that what you would say, De Rousillon?"

"No! no! not that; I was compelled to demand an apology of course; and this being refused, the challenge was inevitable. I was thinking of something else; something I have left undone too long to repair it now. I have been governed by false estimates!"

"We all are, sometimes," said St. Maure, sententiously; but his significant manner escaped the sad and self-absorbed man, who still sat, veiling his brow and eyes with his hand, unconscious or careless of his friend's observation.

"You go out to fight to-morrow at daylight, De Rousillon; that is, if the obsolete weapons *can* be procured the man, the savage rather, selects; if not, we shall substitute pistols, of course—Colonel Kavanaugh and I, his friend, who really thinks him crazy, I believe. Then he can do as he pleases, you know, 'mon ami' (and he laid his hand on the shoulder of De Rousillon, thus rousing him from reverie); "do as he pleases—either fight or delay the matter until those strange weapons can be obtained."

"Yes, delay the matter," said De Rousillon, absently; "I am sure he must come to his senses, for I had in no manner offended him; that is, with any intention of offence."

"What was it all about, then? *Ma fois*, I have never meddled with any duel so mysterious!"

"I can only surmise the cause," said Rousillon, gravely, "and do not feel at liberty to reveal my suspicions—nay, *almost* certainty—but the whole affair was unworthy of civilized men! Curses on a code of conventionalities,"

he added, impetuously, "that discriminates not between the jeopardy of honor and the mere gratification of petty spleen. Why should I suffer this man to kill me, in order to wreak his miserable spite on one who never intentionally injured him? Why should I kill *him*, against whom I cherish not one spark of animosity? It is all wrong, believe me, St. Maure! But there is no other means left of sustaining one's social rights, such as the law takes no note of! Yet I hope there may be a delay. I do earnestly hope for an adjustment of this affair."

"Had I not seen you before, De Rousillon, placed under similar circumstances, comporting yourself with unusual firmness and unquestioned courage, I might find it in my mind to marvel at the nervous unwillingness you manifest to meet this emergency. As it is, I confess I cannot comprehend your conduct."

"Under similar circumstances—no, St. Maure! The early *rencontre* with Claireville was in defence of the reputation of the woman I then *thought* I loved, and surely no man worthy of the name would flinch in such a cause. He escaped with his life; but had I killed instead of wounding him severely, I should never have regretted the act. This is a different case! The man I am to meet is already, spiritually speaking, sorely wounded and disappointed, it may be through me, and I feel to-night that I could take him in my arms and weep over him rather than raise my hand against his life, so deeply do I sympathize with his suffering."

"There is a woman in the case then, De Rousillon; and yet I cannot conjecture."

"Do not suffer yourself to hazard one conjecture on

the subject, St. Maure; you will soon know all, whether I live or die. But, oh! my friend, I confess to you there is now a glory in my life it never knew before!"

"Yes, yes, I perceive; the old story. You have taken away his 'bien-aimee,' and he pursues you with his vengeance! Can it be the American lady—that pretty, fair young widow with her great clear eyes? But no. You who have seen Parisian society, and been one of its lions, could never stake your happiness in a retiring, perhaps even inane person like that! Who, then? Surely! surely! not the Countess Cluche, herself?"

"You make me smile, St. Maure, in spite of my surroundings! As well conjecture Diana of Ephesus! Both of the women you have mentioned are beyond reproach, and singularly unapproachable."

St. Maure turned languidly away, only half satisfied. "I will go now," he said, "and arrange preliminaries with the old American Colonel, since it seems there are still some matters to be settled, and return at midnight. In the meantime you prefer, of course, to be alone."

"Absolutely," was the sole reply, and without another word St. Maure withdrew, encountering on the stairway a mutual friend, evidently en route to the chamber of De Rousillon.

"He will be refused at the door-sill, that is all," thought St. Maure, as he continued his way down-stairs; "but it is not for me to tell him this, to play the part of porter." Pausing a moment on the last platform, and glancing up, he saw to his amazement, that the summons of the Count Cluche had been answered by the opening of the door apparently sealed against intrusion, and that

he had entered the room of his friend and host, for St. Maure was sojourning for a season at "Les Bocages" with the companion of his college days, and thus recruiting health and energies.

"Nothing could more have astonished me than to have been requested to-day to act as second in a duel in which you represent the challenging party," said Maze-ron Rivers, as he seated himself in a deep chair in front of that occupied by De Rousillon. "The man who made this request of me is my guest, and yet I refused him decidedly from the first; for however much I may respect Blamire, you, De Rousillon, have hold of my heart-strings, and I could not stand in such an attitude towards you, even for the sake of hospitality or the stranger within my gate."

"Your wife—does she know of this?" asked De Rousillon, abruptly, in his vibrant emotional voice, without responding to the remarks of Rivers.

"Yes; we communicate thoroughly, one to the other, on all subjects, and for some time she has feared that a shadow of this sort might fall over our circle, and yet hoped and trusted in the forbearance and common sense of both parties, almost to the result of confidence, in a final reconciliation. She told me long ago of the remarks at the dinner-table, but believed in spite of these that the illness of Lionel Blamire, even then pending, might extenuate them in your eyes, and prevent your noticing them finally, even if it did not efface them from his memory. Was it indeed worth while to recall them at all after such a lapse of time? Such suffering on his part! De Rousillon, was not your conduct Quixotic, and is it too late to withdraw your challenge, sent, no

doubt, from a mere allegiance to forms more ancient than wise?"

"On certain conditions I should be most happy to recall it," said De Rousillon, calmly; "but you have seen for yourself, dear Mazon, how entirely stubborn Blamire is on this occasion, and with what ferocity he responded to my note. A man owes it to himself to protect his good name against aspersion—his honor against insults. This is all I have done. Could I have acted differently and held up my head again among my peers?"

"Having held it up so long, I think you could," said Mazon, with his old affectionate smile that won so irresistibly upon the hearts of men, now that women were out of the question. "The poor fellow is half mad with jealousy, my wife thinks. Perhaps you never suspected that before, De Rousillon? I am sure I did not. It seems he has been refused by Genie Montrose—he has raved about it to Miss Lindsay, and believed you to be the cause of his rejection. Now, if you have no serious idea in that direction—and I am almost sure you have none—why not let me tell him so, and relieve his tortured imagination at once? I am convinced that all good results would follow such a declaration on your part."

"If I could make it with truth, Mazon; but I cannot, for I, too, idolize this woman!"

His head fell on his breast. The hand laid on the table was clenched, as in a spasm. It had cost him dear to make this avowal to any but the object of his passion.

"Can this be possible?" said the Count Cluche, after a pause. "Where, then, have my faculties been wan-

dering? I never saw it at all—never suspected such a thing!”

“And Madame! was she, too, blind to the truth?”

“I cannot tell. Perhaps she feared to break the spell by a conjecture. It would make her so blissfully happy, you know, to have her little Genie for a life-long neighbor. Of course,” hesitating slightly, “she was not your confidante?”

“No, no; I never make confidences of that sort except in extremity. It seems due to you, in the character of host to Mrs. Montrose, that I should avow the truth, now that you press me so closely.”

“You are then engaged to Genie?”

“No, Mazon; no. That I love her devotedly she must know, and that a declaration will follow this affection she must believe, knowing, esteeming me as she does. But I have waited for the settlement of this affair—with what anxiety I would hesitate to own to any but a brave man—in order to decide my *right* to make our love more binding. Should I fall, I want to leave her free, even from the light fetters of betrothal—free to choose again without reproach or hindrance.”

“This was fair—this was noble, even,” said the Count Cluche, whose sensitive face had changed in sympathy with every utterance of his friend. “But having won her affections, do you suppose it would be any less hard for her to bear your loss than if betrothed? Would it not have been better to have deferred your courtship altogether until after Blamire’s recovery? Had you forborne to approach Genie during that time of probation, might not her happiness have been even further consulted?”

"It might. But does a man owe nothing to himself? Should I not, in all probability, have lost my chance of winning her affections by such palpable and unexplained delay and neglect? As it is, she wears no ring of troth-plight—no picture to keep alive her memory of me; retains no letters to bathe with bitter tears; and she will forget me sooner than if such records remained of our plighted love. It is intangible now, and, though she may deplore me for a season, she will not feel herself widowed a second time, and perhaps forever, by means of such visible bondage."

He paused and folded his arms upon his breast. "Genie is free," he continued; "yet if I fall I shall die with the dear assurance of her affection; for those innocent eyes have told me all that her lips so far have not been suffered, nay forced, to speak. Cherish her, Mazon, for she is an angel!" and tears rolled over his cheeks.

"But why should you suppose that it is your doom to fall any more than Blamire?" asked the Count Cluche, himself deeply affected. "Are not your chances equal? Is it not the duty of your seconds to make them so?"

"His choice of weapons gives him the advantage, and the animus with which he pursues me. There is much in both. I am faint-hearted in comparison—feeling no rancor against him—no wish to take his life, none of that thirst for his blood that he avows for mine. I have a presentiment, my friend; that I shall fall."

These last words were spoken in a low, gloomy tone of voice, and, in spite of himself, struck a chill to the heart of Mazon Rivers. "He is a madman," he said, "this Scotchman, and ought to be shut up. That is my

private opinion. As to presentiments, I have long discarded them from my list of superstitions. On the contrary, I am more given to lend faith to the Scotch idea of being 'gay before a misfortune.' I felt that myself once upon the eve of a trying occasion when severe disappointment awaited me, and great suffering and humiliation."

He checked himself suddenly, for his mind had reverted to the early ruin of his hopes, attended with so much mortification at Birk-braes, an episode in his life of which he had never spoken to his friend, and which he disliked to remember—for, thrice-blessed as was his present condition, memory still held its sting. "I trust your auguries may be correct, my Mazon; but, reflect, I also shrink from the alternative; shrink from killing this man whom I have innocently injured. Go to him; try and bring him to reason, and lift this fatal shadow from my life."

"One might as well try to take an enraged buffalo by the forelock, as to do anything with Blamire under present circumstances," said Rivers, sadly. "Poor Genie, I think, has made a happy escape!"

"No; he would no doubt have been to her a very tender and devoted husband. This is an upheaving of his noble nature. It is as when the vineyards on the side of Mount Vesuvius are torn asunder by the sudden eruption of lava. Every man's nature has unsounded, un conjectured depths, ready to answer an emergency. I never knew what stuff I was made of myself until the hour of trial came. I had prided myself on my philosophy—my cool courage—but I find myself at last weaker than a willow wand—wax in the grasp of my passions."



Covering his face with his hands, De Rousillon bowed his head upon the table before him, upon which implements for writing reposed for the night's occupation. To his mother, to his sisters, to his brothers, to Genie herself, he meant to write a few brief words of affectionate farewell before the dawn of the day that might be his last on earth. Silence prevailed through the chamber, for not by word or sign would Mazon Rivers have interrupted that sacred wrestle of soul that was going on mutely yet almost visibly to him in the breast of De Rousillon. As he stood behind the chair of his friend, with one hand resting on its high-carved Gothic back, and the other lightly extended above the bowed head beneath, he looked like a young priest bestowing benediction.

It was a part of the pure and feminine nature of this man to seek sudden solace in prayer in all times of tribulation and of need, and now, with mute-moving lips, he prayed that peace might descend on the stormy soul of De Rousillon. He entreated from the Most High some happy and unexpected termination to the difficulties that beset his friend—his *friends*—for among these he had come also to number Lionel Blamire—and confident that his prayer was heard, even though it might not, according to the views of the All-wise, be favorably answered, he noiselessly, and without farewell, withdrew.

## CHAPTER XVI.

He comes not, I have watched the sun go down.  
And still he comes not ! Once it was not so,  
He recks not how these bitter tears do flow !

PERCIVAL.

For we are pressed by heavy laws.—WORDSWORTH.

ST. MAURE had returned at midnight to find De Rousillon engaged in writing letters, quite calm, and even cheerful of aspect, and to acquaint him with the results of his mission. Blamire's eagerness for the conflict, and unwillingness for the least delay, had induced him to listen to reason and accept pistols instead of carbines, selecting from the armory of "Les Hironnelles" those famous weapons called generally "sans peur," et "sans remords," with one of which the late "Count Cluche" had silenced forever a political adversary.

These titles were conspicuously engraven on silver plates attached to the handles of these formidable weapons, which Lionel Blamire had fancied from their resemblance to his twin pistols, "Tom" and "Dick," now at home, unfortunately, over his library mantle-piece, and which in every rencounter had borne good luck to those who wielded them.

When Colonel Kavanaugh remonstrated with him on the subject of using pistols of such antiquity and long disuse, Blamire replied that their workmanship was all the better for not being recent, and that it was the business of the seconds to see that they were in order.

"The barrels may be worn thin," rejoined Colonel

Kavanaugh. "They may hang fire or explode in the hand, in either of which case—"

"Fate only would be to blame," interrupted Blamire. "It is all settled, I suppose, at the Great Tribunal; and whatever happens I shall believe to be the proof of God's immutable decree."

"You are almost a Mohammedan in your Presbyterianism, Lionel."

"Or a Greek, or a Brahmin, why don't you say as well? or even if it comes to that, a Catholic? The belief in fate is merely a matter of temperament. Madame de Sevigne, the lively letter-writer, says somewhere in her correspondence, 'that the ball that killed Marshal Turenne was moulded in eternity.' She was his contemporary, you know, and comforted herself in this fashion for her friend's death."

So it was decided upon, after consultation with M. St. Maure, whose faith in the traditions of these pistols no doubt swayed his judgment considerably, that "sans peur," et "sans remords" were to be the instruments in the adjustment of a quarrel that seemed founded on these principles of action.

Blamire slept soundly and rose refreshed to partake of his bath and coffee at five o'clock, but De Rousillon, who had passed an almost sleepless night, woke, after the broken slumber of an hour, languid and depressed with an aching heart and body nerveless and unstrung. His bath and coffee brought to his frame little vigor or refreshment, but he put aside sternly the glass of "eau de vie" tendered him by St. Maure. "I do not need Dutch courage," he said, "my friend, and I must keep my sight clear and nerves steady, but it is a wretched business, and

I chafe under the conventional necessity of a meeting that is altogether a mistake 'from first to last,'” murmuring as he turned away, “*She* never could have loved *him*—even had the earth contained no De Rousillon.” “*She*? I am correct, then,” thought St. Maure. “There is a woman in the case, but whom?” And conjecture was busy in his brain. Strange to say, the problem was not solved to his satisfaction by any possible suggestion of his own fancy, and was decided only by circumstances and events that compelled conviction.

In the meantime Genie Montrose had been made conscious of the cloud that rested on the household at “*Les Hirondelles*” in a way she could scarcely comprehend, far less explain.

The day was a long one that brought not “*De Rousillon*” to her side, and on that of the challenge he did not cross the sill of his own house. It was one to him of serious and bitter consideration, as we know. Then there was a slight, almost imperceptible, cloud on the faces of the Count and Countess Cluche, and Lionel Blamire kept his chamber.

Colonel Kavanaugh seemed flurried yet constrained; and Miss Lindsay had nervous headache, and could not be disturbed. Her maid whispered to Mrs. Montrose that her indisposition was the consequence, she thought, of some bad news Mr. Blamire had communicated to her late the night before, which the guilty soul of poor Genie immediately appropriated as having its origin in her very decided refusal of his abrupt addresses.

“I am sorry to have offended them,” she thought, “but who could have imagined such an indiscreet outburst! A man I knew for years, and valued as friend, relative, and

neighbor, to break out all of a sudden as a lover! I could almost as soon think of Colonel Kavanaugh in that light. It was really too preposterous, monstrous even."

Evening came, still no De Rousillon. In vain that becoming toilet of black lace, over gray silk. In vain the La Marque roses in the hair, the pearls on the snowy bosom and arms. He did not come for whom alone she wore this raiment, now first assumed in honor of his fully comprehended love. The lingering light died on the chestnut hills. The moon came forth with her attendant stars to cast her silvery radiance o'er the scene, and bring out the sharp lines of rock and tree and vase and statue as the sculptor's chisel alone could never do. A stillness crept into her very heart that seemed to bear some likeness to the chill repose of death. Was it the shadow cast by coming grief? Was it the augury of hopes o'erthrown, and youth consigned to a long night of woe, such as makes age a signal of the dawn, which has its only sunrise on the grave?

Genie went alone that night to the fountain of Arethusa and mingled her tears with its waters! The Countess Cluche watched her with silent anguish from her chamber window, that overlooked the lawn. She knew what storm was brooding o'er the peace of that young beloved one, and earnestly prayed that it might burst harmlessly over her fair and innocent head. She had done all she could to avert the wrath of the adversaries—had reasoned with one, appealed to the passions of the other—so far in vain. She had read the progress of the attachment of Genie and De Rousillon as one reads a precious volume, page by page, silent about the contents till the end should come, in reverence to the author—

silent even to the husband of her soul, because she felt that she had no right to reveal the result of her own conjectures merely until made visible and proven to all eyes. In fear and tremulous joy she had followed those love-passages upon which the happiness of two cherished friends depended, and in a hope, that was as disinterested as her affections, that fate might prove propitious to their union.

The cold, the selfish, the narrow-minded of this world know nothing of the outside kingdom of those empowered by the possession of the rare qualities of generosity, sympathy, and imagination, to enter into the lives of others, appropriate them for a season, and enjoy or suffer with the objects of their disinterested friendship or affection. Such beings lead dual lives, each acting upon, yet resting the other. For after all what is it that we so earnestly desire, so greatly need, as to go out of ourselves sometimes, and let individuality have time to repose and recuperate? What—putting it in a practical point of view—could be more salutary, more sanitary?

Swedenborg tells us that angels and demons exist in this world in the guise of mortals, “and by this shall ye know them,” he adds, “that as good is pursued by the one for its own sake, so is evil by the other.” What, indeed, more clearly typifies an angelic nature than a disinterested love of virtue and well-doing? What a demoniac one so strongly as a wanton thirst for mischief and evil deeds?

Judging thus the Countess Cluche was one of the fleshly angels of this world, whereof we read in the Scriptures as having abode all night in the house of the patriarch, and for the sake of whom the faithful dare not

to this day to refuse the beggar at their gates, lest haply angel plumes should be folded beneath the torn gaberdine of the vagrant.

It is better to err on the right side and make sure that we refuse no angel.

Genie went late to her chamber. The moon was passing through a silvery mass of clouds, tunnelling her way through vaporing mountains as she crossed the lawn. From her window, above the one and beneath the other, the mistress of the mansion looked down on the fair woman, up to the queenly planet, and she mutely prayed that the one might pass as speedily and perfectly from the cloud that overshadowed her pathway now as the moon from hers. "Those who have suffered deeply are the true observers of and sympathizers with nature. To the young, the gay, the thoughtless, she seems but a splendid panorama displayed for their amusement, having no part in their lives.

When Genie Montrose entered her room, she saw her boy's nurse sitting by his bed, waiting anxiously for her coming.

"He has gone to sleep now," the woman said, in that broad Scotch accent that grated strangely on the lady's ear to-night. "Gone to sleep; but he cried and moaned for you, ma'am, as he seldom does, and asked me again and again whether you had gone to join his papa in heaven. It was so strange, ma'am. I can't think he is quite well. I am glad you have come."

"He is feverish," said Genie, pressing her lips on his hot brow and throat. "Where have you taken him to-day, Maggie? What has he eaten? The time was when I did not ask such questions," thought the re-

morseful mother; "but I have been mad of late, and intrusted my treasure chiefly to another, who, though tried and faithful, is not gifted with maternal insight. My Graham, forgive me!"

She clasped her slumbering infant passionately in her trembling arms, then rapidly disrobing herself, dismissed the tired attendant and prepared to pass the night in watching by his pillow.

The servant had disavowed all neglect of her charge, and Genie believed her assertions, having found her true to every trust, and, as the night wore on, the decline of fever encouraged her to hope that some passing irritation of the system alone had possession of her idolized boy.

Morning brought other revelations that for a season swept everything before them, and proved the strength of the current of her master-passion. Just before dawn Genie lay down to sleep beside her child, now covered with a plenteous moisture, and, for the time, free from fever. She enjoyed an hour of sweet and refreshing repose, interrupted at length by a prolonged tapping at her door. This had at first failed to arouse her, profound as her slumber was; but at last she started up suddenly, and pressing her hands to her brow, realized the situation. It was not Maggie seeking entrance, for she slept in the adjoining room and the door between the two chambers was never locked, as that invariably was at night that opened on the corridor. Could the Countess Cluche have sent her a physician, having heard of her child's indisposition, or was some one in the castle ill and in need of her services?

All these conjectures passed through her brain, as she



walked from the bed to the door, having first rapidly and mechanically thrust her feet in her slippers, and thrown on her convenient dressing-gown, to answer the summons.

Miss Constance Lindsay, in very similar attire, stood before her.

"Come in, dear Miss Lindsay. You have heard of my boy's illness, no doubt, through Maggie; yet I did not hear her go out."

"No, Genie, I have heard nothing of the kind. I hope there is not anything serious. Of course not, however, or you could not look as you do."

"And yet I feel that I have been very wrong, Miss Constance," said the penitent mother, shaking her fair, braided head, for she had not unfastened and combed her hair on the preceding night, owing to her entire engrossment with her boy, and this neglect stood her soon in good stead.

"I knew you would think so when the time came round and you had reflected on what you had done, Genie. I knew you would never let that stern, dreadful Frenchman come between you and such a man as Lionel Blamire! Yet all the same, my dear, they have gone out to fight about you," and poor Miss Lindsay cast herself down in an agony of grief on the first chair.

"To fight about me?" said Genie, gazing pallid and horror-stricken, with great distended eyes, full in Miss Lindsay's face.

"Yes, Genie."

"Great God, what have I come to?" and for a moment she covered her quivering features with her hands.

Then dropping them helplessly, she asked: "Where do they fight, Miss Lindsay? we must go to them."

“Oh, Genie! not for the world! I have no strength left. Old Malcom did not know exactly where they were to meet, on the ‘Colline Verte,’ he thought.”

“It is there,” said Genie, advancing to the window and pushing open the shutters, so as to let in the early light, flowing in from the east, and pointing with her hand to the verdant slope beyond, on the edge of which a beacon-fire seemed to have been kindled—brighter than ever earthly fire glowed before. “It is there—nearly a mile away—and we stand useless here while they murder one another. Oh, my darling, my darling!”

Miss Lindsay never forgot that cry of mingled anguish and passionate affection, and mechanically she, too, rose and went to the window—following the pointing hand, the woeful eyes. Nor did she ever forget the scene she witnessed, photographed, as it was, on her brain by that moment of agony—that scene from which Genie Montrose turned after one glance at the distant hill that bounded its horizon, as though she saw it not; but, with another cry, wild, shrill, and passionate as the first, “Wait for me, Mr. Rivers; I come.” She had descried the phaeton of Mazon Rivers approaching the door of the front hall, over which her chamber was situated, and its master emerging from the balcony. Signalling to Maggie, who came in at the sound of voices, startled and sleepy-eyed from her nursery, she bade her in a low voice bring her a shawl and veil. She was promptly obeyed, and in another moment had wrapped them about her head and shoulders, saturated a handkerchief in cologne water and rushed across the chamber. She paused on the door-sill, however, one moment.

“Don’t leave my baby until I return, Maggie; if ill,

call the Countess. Stockings—no matter, there is no time now. God bless you, Miss Constance,” and she darted down the broad stairway, and in another moment stood side by side with Mazon Rivers on the gravelled carriage-way. “You must take me with you, Mr. Rivers; I know on what dreadful errand you are bound, but I must go.”

“Do not insist upon it, Genie; you know I can refuse you nothing; but this is wholly wrong, unseasonable, believe me.”

“Let her accompany you, Mazon,” said a sweet voice both knew so well that it was scarcely necessary to look back to recognize the speaker. “Let her go with you; there is no reality more torturing than anxiety. God speed you, Genie.” And in a few moments more the phaeton, drawn by its brisk American trotters, was out of sight of the gazers, leaving sad hearts behind.

The Countess Cluche went into her oratory and knelt in fervent prayer. Miss Lindsay, spell-bound and tearless, stood gazing from the window on the scene before her until the sun had climbed the sky and became a distinct ball of brazen fire, and the clear, rapid river which had looked like a ribbon of steel in the light of dawn grew blue and roseate beneath the smiles of day. Then she turned sorrowfully from the casement, for the child was waking and asking for his mother again in piteous accents, his mother “gone to live with his papa.”

The nurse was consoling him with many promises and persuasions, which seemed wholly unavailing to quiet his infantile anxiety.

At last Miss Lindsay, approaching him almost without

thinking of her words, said, as if inspired: "Perhaps she will bring you a new papa when she comes, if you are a good boy," thus unconsciously touching a string on which he often harped.

It was almost a mania with this child to crave a father and be like other children to whom he found himself unequal in possessing but one parent. He seemed at times to feel that this was his mother's fault, and would call on her almost fiercely to give him back his papa. When told he was happy—in Heaven—he would scowl in his childish way and call Heaven a wicked place—God a bad man, to keep his poor papa who wanted to come to him. These words were exquisitely distressing to his mother, who had, until within a few weeks, never thought of substituting a father for her boy, or of any other earthly happiness than his baby smile.

A sudden quietude succeeded the excessive agitation of the little laird of Montrose. His face was wreathed with smiles at the whimsical promise Miss Lindsay had suddenly made him, and he stretched his hands to the window.

"Will he come in there?" he asked. "Can he fly with his pretty white wings?"

"Oh no, Graham; he will walk in at the door, I hope, and bring you pretty playthings, and flowers and strawberries."

"What a good papa," he said, clasping his little hands and composing himself in an attitude of meditation not unusual with him when possessed with an idea. "Then I will wait, and mind Maggie; you go home now, Miss Lindsay. I want to see my papa by hisself."

"I will send Malcom with your breakfast, Graham;

what will you have, my baby?" she said, kissing him tenderly.

"Nossing," was the weary answer, as the blue eyes closed languidly, with that expression of fatigue that always accompanies a child's indisposition, the lashes lying lightly over the pallid cheeks, the eyelids quivering.

"He is going to be ill," thought Miss Lindsay, whose prescience was won from experience and sympathy; "ill, and at such a time. In any case, his mother must be miserable; but let me trust that Lionel, at least, may escape unhurt and life be spared to both."

A summons from her own nursery compelled her to leave Genie's boy, as she thought, for a time only, but her return to that chamber was a matter over which she had no control, so essentially do circumstances mould every action of our lives.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

Has she a magic to exorcise hate?

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All gone, all calm! Is everything a dream?

Thou art safe, unhurt! No blood of thine is shed.

I do not love thee, but I am a woman.

BULWER—"Lady of Lyons."

RAPIDLY and steadily the phaeton was driven on by the skilful coachman over slope and level plain, and pendulous bridge, past orchards of almond trees weighted down with their unripe fruit, and olive groves planted in sheltered nooks, blue and misty in the early light, and vineyards bathed with dew still fragrant

in many places with their lingering wealth of blossoms. Rivers had attempted once or twice to point the attention of Genie to objects of interest on their way, but so far in vain. She sat intently staring forward in the direction of the "Colline Verte," with moving or parted lips, with clasped hands and tear-stained cheeks, praying evidently, and wrapped away in bitter reverie.

At last they struck the narrow and circuitous road that, after many windings, was to lead them to the summit of the "Colline Verte," on the very top of which that beacon fire, before described, seemed blazing that heralded the rising sun, and relieved against which they saw, by glimpses, a group of outlined forms.

Their progress was now necessarily slow, as it was devious, and Genie's impatience evidenced itself in wistful glances and murmured words, to both of which Mazon Rivers made constant and soothing response.

"Nothing will be done, Genie, until I reach them; do not fear, we shall be in good time after all. I trust the whole thing may be prevented."

"Oh, I hope so; but I dread the worst," said Genie, speaking for the first time, "and they may only resent interference, mine especially."

"Your presence, Genie, may work wonders; yet I confess I was opposed to this step of yours. There is no reason why you should be pushed to the front in this way. It is not your characteristic to be sensational."

"No, no; but it is on my account, so Miss Lindsay says, that they have gone out to fight; and yet what have I done to either to deserve to be so treated? Is it my fault that I could not love cousin Lionel? my fault that—"

She hesitated. Rivers filled up the pause, "that De Rousillon loved you? No, Genie, you are not to blame for either of these contretemps, but the passions of men have been the same from the beginning of time, and fair women have ever been the cause of quarrel, from Helen of Troy to this day. Blamire has behaved badly."

"Oh, yes, I wonder that a man like De Rousillon is not above duelling. I thought he was superior to all prejudice, a law unto himself."

"She loves him," thought the Count Cluche; "God grant that he may be spared for his great happiness. How unconsciously she reveals her preference."

"Oh, God, I see them plainly now," cried poor Genie, as a sudden turn in the road revealed the group above them, clearly defined against the crimson sky, yet not altogether in that dazzling light distinguishable save from outline or contour.

"They are in position," burst from the lips of Rivers. "Can it be possible that they have not waited for me?" and he drew out his watch. "That, because I am five minutes late, they proceed to extremities without me?"

Setting his lips firmly, his face grew ashen pale, and he folded his arms tightly across his breast. Genie veiled her eyes with her hands, trembled visibly, but was silent and tearless.

And now they have reached the spot, where stern and silent stood the confronting foes, with their seconds and surgeons and other accessories.

"You will stay where you are for the present, Genie," said Rivers, as he sprang from the phaeton. "Hold the horses firmly, Jacques; and, Pierre, have an eye to this lady."

But Genie would not be restrained, and she too dismounted impetuously immediately after Mazon, and fled rapidly in the direction of the combatants before he could arrest her progress.

De Rousillon saw her as she came, and his resolution was taken instantly; but owing to his position Blamire was unconscious of her approach, her presence, until too late to be actuated by either.

The demonstrations of his adversary had been so ferocious from the outset that gradually the blood of De Rousillon had become heated under the constant pressure of a hatred that he could scarcely understand or account for, and yet which proved contagious through its very intensity to the last to some degree. It had not been the intention of the Frenchman to lose one advantage that the conflict afforded him, or throw away his life from a fanatical idea that the duel was one of supererogation. Gradually, resentment for the whole proceeding of Blamire had nerved him to an almost equal state of eagerness for the encounter, but in a heart-beat all this was changed by the appearance of the pale and carelessly-robed woman, who advanced with white waving arms and flying feet to the scene of conflict.

As soon as the seconds saw Rivers come on the ground, the word was given to fire; and Genie, a moment later, beheld Blamire bathed in his blood, extended on the sward.

Yet, even in that mood of excitement and unconsciousness of self, she had seen De Rousillon raise his arm and fire in the air—and yet he was the one who stood unharmed! She tottered forward, extended her arms toward him, while a radiant smile for a moment illumined her countenance—a smile so seraphic that no beholder



ever forgot its intense expression of joy and gratitude; then suddenly swerving in her course, while a grayness like that of death overspread her countenance, she fell by the side of Blamire in a deep fainting fit. The wounded man had not lost consciousness, though suffering frightfully, for his right hand had been shattered by his own pistol, and "sans remords" had done his work remorselessly at last.

"What strange creatures these woman are," mused Colonel Kavanaugh, as he raised the prostrate form of his darling, having seen the surgeons busily engaged with the wound of Lionel. "Who would have thought it was Blamire she loved, after all? Why couldn't she have said so and saved all this trouble and pain?"

It was a long time before Genie revived to consciousness, and then she saw only the friendly faces of Rivers and Colonel Kavanaugh bending above her. For a moment she remembered nothing; then all came back like an electric flash. The revelation was complete as sudden.

"Is cousin Lionel killed?" she asked faintly. "I thought I saw De Rousillon fire in the air, and yet—Blamire was wounded! How was this? What does it all mean?"

"Lionel's hand is badly mangled by his own pistol," said Rivers. "That wretched old French concern he insisted on using," interpolated Colonel Kavanaugh. "I told him what he might expect from the first, but he was as deaf as an adder, to the voice of reason, and behold the consequence! I wash my hands of the whole proceeding."

"I wonder you countenanced it at all," said Genie, reproachfully—"a man of your age, of your experience!

But I hope there is an end of it now. Thank God, no lives are lost! I trust cousin Lionel may recover without serious injury."

"Two of his fingers are dangling by a thread," said Colonel Kavanaugh dryly; "mischief enough, I think, for one time, and, as to there being an end of it, of course there is, just now. But his pistol finger is uninjured, and, ten to one, as soon as he recovers, he will ask for another opportunity of proving his claim to your affections, Genie, which I begin to think are in the right place after all. Everything depends on you and your inclinations. I trust and hope, my dear, your feelings lie in the proper direction."

"They do, indeed," said poor Genie, looking up suddenly through her tears, for she had received the harrowing communication about poor Lionel's shattered hand with bitter weeping. "I am rightly punished, I suppose, for swerving a moment from the duty God has placed before me. Henceforth my little Graham shall know no rival. His will, his happiness, shall be my law of life."

"Well, that is as good a turn as any to give to the matter. Stick to your resolutions, Genie, but if you do take a husband, let it be the Scotchman, my dear, not the Gaul."

"Never," said Genie, bitterly, "never while reason and will prevail over imbecility. When I become the wife of Lionel Blamire, you may believe me mad; but why particularize? I shall not marry at all. I have told you this, now let the matter rest."

"So it is this Monsieur Rousse, after all," thought Colonel Kavanaugh, as with a shrug of his shoulders worthy of a native he turned away to seek his suffering kinsman.

Thus ended the duel of "La Colline Verte." What might come of it later, none dared more than surmise at the time.

After a few words of condolence, dictated not more by courtesy than real regret, De Rousillon and his second returned to Les Bocages, there to await the sentence of the law, at that time very stringent on the subject of duelling.

As an alien, this could in no way affect Blamire, whose physical agony for a time conquered every other feeling, even that of hatred for his foeman, or passionate affection for Genie. He surrendered himself into the hands of physician and nurses with the docility of a child who has scalded himself by pulling the tea-kettle over on his own head.

The injury was self-inflicted, and he had no one to blame but himself, for had not Colonel Kavanaugh warned him about the pistols, and had not his adversary fired in the air? It was altogether a very mortifying, and, let us hope, chastening incident in the career of our Scottish lover and duellist, in both of which characters Lionel had appeared to less than his usual advantage.

The sorrowful procession was met at the gates of the "plaisance" by the Countess Cluche and Miss Lindsay in the pony chaise, and the anguish of the latter can well be conceived at the condition of Blamire, borne on a litter, and faint with agony.

At first she thought him dying, and broke out in bitter reproaches against De Rousillon; then changing her attack, she assailed his friend: "See, Genie, this is your work!" she said, bitterly, as she alighted and stood beside her wounded relative, while tears gushed over her pallid face. "May God forgive you, I cannot!"

These words were repented of later, but perhaps the effect they produced on the stricken woman to whom they were addressed was enduring and not to be overcome. For it is certain she never again, at any time, though bearing the reproach meekly at the moment, clasped hands with Constance Lindsay after the manner of their ancient friendship.

The "Countess Clueche," though greatly shocked and grieved at the accident which had befallen Blamire, was relieved that no life had been the sacrifice, and felt a glow of real satisfaction when she heard of the generous conduct of her countryman from her husband's lips. A few whispered words sufficed to tell her this simple story, for in the presence of Blamire silence and sadness prevailed over the little group, that had paused one moment at the gates of Les Hirondelles.

"Take me back with you instead of Miss Lindsay, who prefers naturally you see to walk by the side of Lionel, for I am exhausted and cannot spare another moment from my ill boy." This was the appeal Genie made to her friend as she stood pallid and faint on the roadside by her pony-chaise, and in another moment, with a few words of apology to those she left behind, Marie Minande was driving her miniature establishment through the grounds at the utmost speed of the astonished steed, while Genie, with closed eyes and locked features, lay scarcely conscious back on the cushioned seat.

Silence and speed were best at such a time, remarks and questions alike impertinent. Such were the convictions of the fair Jehu, who bent all her energies on the one point of finding and taking the shortest way to the chateau.

Rosolio was standing at the open door as they drove to the court entrance, and the old seneschal was obliged to lift Genie from her position and bear her in his arms to a seat in the hall, where, after the due administration of restoratives, she was sufficiently recovered to enable her, with the assistance of her friends, to ascend the staircase and seek her own apartment, which she entered alone.

When she opened the door of her chamber she saw Dr. La Rue bending above her child, while Maggy stood mutely beside him. He was resting now, but had been wildly delirious again during her absence, and was changed by his few hours of illness as only a child can change from such a cause.

The agonized mother knelt by the bedside and pressed her fainting lips to his little flaccid, burning hands, while a wild prayer for help, for mercy, went up silently from her struggling heart to the God whose hand was heavy upon her.

It was borne in upon her conviction in some manner that all of this suffering was a sign of the divine displeasure, at her failure to discharge the one duty that remained to her. Kneeling, she vowed that, if her child were spared, she would make his happiness and welfare the sole law of her being, and put aside as sinful every feeling that might interfere with these.

She rose, strengthened by this brief prayer and sudden resolution to look her fate in the face, and to strive henceforth with all the force that in her lay for the life of her child. Her voice was firm and steady as she spoke to the physician.

"He is very ill, Dr. La Rue, I see from his counte-

nance; from your own—can he be saved?" she gasped, and clung to the chair.

"Oh, I hope so, my dear young lady. Care can do much, and the constitution of this child seems naturally good."

"What ails him? name his malady."

"It is malarious fever, I think. Within the last few weeks I have seen several cases in this vicinity, more or less severe."

"Any fatal ones, Dr. La Rue?" The large, clear eyes were turned full upon his face; their agony was unmistakable.

"A few," was the reluctant answer.

"Then we have just a chance. Does this malady run its course quickly?"

"In about ten days, so far as I have observed it; convalescence sets in then, or," he hesitated, but she continued for him, "death ensues, this is what you would say, Dr. La Rue, did you not pity me too much to hazard the whole truth? Tell me," she added, looking up after a pause, during which her head had drooped upon her breast, her locked hands fallen before her, "Tell me what I shall do to try and save my son! Set my task before me, then you know," with a wild smile, "if we fail, we *fail*! And oh, what a failure!"

"The very first portion of this task is to keep yourself calm and strong, equal to any emergency. Your child will require your whole energy and attention, and let us trust these may be rewarded."

"I will try to forget my humanity and merge myself in duty. I will cease to be his mother in becoming his slave. You shall not find me wanting, Dr. La Rue; so give me your directions."

Then began that wrestle that none who have undertaken it can ever forget, the wrestle with the demon of continued fever. The watcher knows from the first that even if life be spared it must hover on the brink of death before the end comes, that the frame must be worn to skeleton leanness, reduced to more than infantile weakness, racked with pain and wasted with disease ere the good genius "convalescence" deigns to perch on the pillow of the invalid, and fan with her benignant wings the flame of his drooping energies back to life. The best view of the case embraces a condition like this; but there is another just as probable, that shows no recuperation from exhaustion and suffering, and points to a draped skeleton sitting sternly in the shadow.

Genie's imagination compassed the whole situation at a bound. The desperate game between life and death was to be played in that chamber, the torch burn brightly or be inverted.

Nay, more, the stakes of another life were entered there, to be decided by the issue of that closely contested game!

She closed her eyes and shuddered, while a strong hand seemed clutching at her throat. It was her last display of weakness for days. From that moment she was nerved as those who walk on slender wires must be, stretched over foaming cataracts. Like them she would not permit her vision to sound the depths below, but looked ahead!

Days passed on, and found the mild young mother ever at her post of love and duty—never emerging from the shadow, refusing all foreign aid; sustained as by spiritual means, for the occasional draught which alone

her lips could receive, of milk or tea, or iced water, shared with her child, seemed scarcely of power to support her unwearying energy. The doctor came and went, and saw no change on which to hang a hope of ultimate amendment. The child wasted and ceased to be irritable; receiving meekly medicine and nourishment, which seemed to have no efficacy to cure or strengthen. His mind wandered constantly. He slept fitfully, with half-open eyes, and the dark sordes clung to his ruby gums. Dread signs these, that the initiated know too well; of which even inexperienced Genie was watchful and suspicious.

At last the crisis came; he fell into coma, simulating death—so profound was that slumber, in which no quiver of the eyelid, no movement of the muscles, no breathing that could be heard, save by the ear bent over the parted lips, gave token of vitality or promise of returning consciousness.

“Let him sleep, continue the drops,” was all the doctor said when urged by the crushed mother to try some active treatment.

“But he cannot swallow, doctor.”

“He absorbs!”

“And must he lie this way, unbathed, unfed, sleeping himself to death, his useless mother sitting at his side?”

“The great universal mother is doing more for him than you could do with all your love! Be firm—the change will come ere long.”

“The change”—what change? At these cold words Genie’s strength all at once gave way. She sank a flaccid heap to the floor, not unconscious, but unavailable



for many hours, during which Marie Minande kept watch by the little Graham, still lapped in coma.

In the meantime another sufferer lay in the chateau, surrounded by friends and nurses, and wise physicians, who were, with all their skill, trying to ward off the Nemesis of wounded nerves and tendons—that sleuth-hound among diseases more ready to seize by the throat and slay the robust and young than the old and feeble, whose fangs are never loosened when once firmly set while life remains—the implacable tetanus.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

To say he has departed,  
His voice, his step are gone!  
To feel impatient-hearted  
Yet know we must live on!  
Oh! I could not endure  
To whisper of such woe,  
Did I not feel this sleep insure  
That it will not be so.—LEIGH HUNT.

**T**HIRTY-SIX hours of slumber that simulated death had elapsed ere the child awoke, exhausted, nerveless, yet conscious, and craving food. The required nourishment, ever at hand, was carefully administered by Marie Minande, and, after partaking of a few spoonsful of sago, the child looked up and smiled faintly in her face, that weak and weary smile so piteous ever on an infant's lips, then murmured inarticulately the word "mamma."

He had seen in the gray morning light that his attendant was not his mother, and this power of discrimi-

nation seemed propitious to the anxious watcher, who lost not another moment in summoning the parent to her child.

“Be very calm, Genie; he is better—I think he will live; but there must be no excitement. The slightest shock might hurl him over the precipice to the edge of which he clings. Remember, this is a new birth; he is given back to you; be very tender of this new-born life.”

All this time she was leading the poor stricken mother, half dazed with the suddenness of this hope, to the bedside of her boy, over whom she hung, weeping silently for a few moments.

“Mamma; I want my mamma,” he repeated feebly, as he saw the Countess Cluche gazing at him from the foot of the bed without perceiving his mother, who hung over yet behind his pillow.

“What does my baby want?” asked Genie, commanding herself to speak in a perfectly natural voice. “What shall his mamma bring him?”

“Nossing, only you!” and in those words she felt repaid for nights of sleepless anguish, days of weary watching.

The cup of her life seemed to run over with fresh joy and thankfulness. Such power have infant lips to confer priceless blessings on maternal solicitude! Oh! surely when God gave his son to perish on the cross, it was in acknowledgment of the superiority of this tie of motherhood to any other known on earth, that tie which neither disgrace nor ingratitude nor idiocy can break or loosen, but which in its perfection brings the heart of woman to the gates of Paradise.

From that hour the child slowly but surely recovered, though with that fitfulness of recuperation which still made the closest vigil necessary to his welfare, and filled his mother's heart for weeks with keen solicitude.

In the meantime, after excruciating suffering and menaced tetanus, Lionel Blamire lay quieted by the magic power of hasheesh, which had rendered the tense nerves and muscles that had defied all other means of relaxation flaccid and comfortable again, although for a time the mind of the patient had been set adrift by the occult remedy on a sea of the wildest imaginings. Most of his time had been spent on an iceberg in the Arctic ocean in company with a walrus and a white bear, the latter of which unpleasant companions was divided from him only by a small floe which he was incessantly trying to cross, and as constantly slipping back to the edge of with preternatural howls. As to the walrus, it was content to peer in his face and flap its cool flippers close to his ear, while, from time to time, it showed its ivory tusks in a kind of fiendish fish-like smile; yet, on the whole, it was a comfort to him, and he was grateful for its attentions, hopeful, too, that the polar bear, who must reach him sooner or later (such is the strange mixture of reason and hallucination which this drug occasions), would devour the seal before attacking the man ultimately to be his prey—a respite, if no more.

There were many more such visions, due to the fantastic remedy, of which no mention need be made, one sample sufficing to show at what price those who partake of this magic hippocra purchase immunity from physical torture or from mental realities. It might, however, have formed one ingredient in that wondrous bowl

Helen of Greece is said by Homer to have mixed for the night draught of the guests of Menelaus, the secret of which had been taught her by an Egyptian sorceress, and which secured sleep and marvellous dreams to those who quaffed its delicious contents.

In the chateau of "Les Hirondelles," over which a cloud had brooded grimly for many weeks, there was rejoicing, heartfelt though silent, in many hearts when the invalid child, the wounded man, were both pronounced "out of danger"—those words which, from the lips of a trusted physician, are like the cry of "land" from the masthead of the Pinta to the weary, struggling soul of Columbus.

On the first day permitted to them by Dr. La Rue, the children of the chateau formed a brief procession to the chamber of that small sovereign (royal by the right of feebleness), who, reclining in a deep chair, beyond the edge of which his little socked feet protruded indolently, received them in a princely state, and with royal indifference.

First came the six-year-old "Marquis Mazon" Count Cluche in the "all hail hereafter" (but for the republic since instituted, and which threatens to hold its own, but which never *can* wipe out from certain minds the prestige of ancient blood and rank), a slender, handsome boy, with his mother's purple eyes and marble skin, his father's clustering, gold-brown locks and the famous smile of the Ruffins.

He was the bearer of a waxen Madonna, with the child Jesus in her arms, the child John, clothed in a little lambskin, at her knee, and an angel overhead, with outspread wings, and a nimbus suspended over the group.

This toy, for such it was in the opinion of the little Laird of Montrose, did the youthful Mazon gravely deposit on the chair by the side of that potentate, who surveyed it with large, wondering eyes, great and solemn with the recent presence of illness, afraid to touch it lest the angel might "get angry and fy away." A little speech accompanied this gift, perfectly incomprehensible to the recipient thereof, setting forth the holiness of the offering and the sweetness of the infant Jesus, whom Graham was enjoined to imitate.

"Is he made of sugar? Can I eat him?" asked this small Scottish cannibal, with the imperturbable gravity of recent convalescence and waking up to something like interest in the gift for the first time. The present of Eugenie—the four-year-old romp and darling of all hearts, with her piquant, irregular, and dimpled face, her father's image—was far better received. It consisted of a little snow-white woolly dog, that by means of certain springs could be made to open its mouth, prick up its ears, wag its tail, and utter a joyous bark. This idol for three whole days did Graham bow down before and worship, until finding that it would not eat, he suspected its mortality, and consigned it to contempt. He said "fanks" for this gift, however, and even inclined once and kissed the donor, so deeply was he stirred by its similitude to a tiny poodle he had seen and coveted when in Paris, the principal pet of his grandmother Ravenshaw, who had bribed him with many gifts to call her "Auntie," but who was inexorable on the dog question!

The third gift was presented by the infant of the family—"Marie Euphrosyne" by name—an exquisite ivory creature with perfect features, dark eyes and jet black

hair, fine and straight as those of a camel's-hair brush, and a mien of serious dignity, said to resemble her beautiful aunt Eugenie, and more like a miniature woman than a baby of two years old. This gift succeeded in rousing the little Laird completely and causing his face to break into joyous smiles. It consisted of a small silver tray carefully carried by the little maiden, who firmly refused the assistance of her *bonne*, covered with fairy cups and dishes of fine painted china, each filled with some choice dainty from bonbons of Paris up to pomegranate granules, pink and fresh as the coral of eastern mains, designed to tempt the appetite of the invalid. With clasped hands and beaming eyes did he watch his little visitors array the small round table, on which he took his meals, with these fairy dishes, while they clustered round to see him serve his "tea party," which he did seriously and gracefully, dispensing with little trembling hands a cup of tea to each; then falling back again in his chair to admire his treasures.

At last he heaved a deep sigh of mingled weariness and fulness of contentment, and clasping his little woolly dog in his arms, begged to be laid in his white crib, where he slept, a recuperative slumber, dreaming no doubt, as many wiser brains have done, of his novel and rich possessions.

It was at the close of this little scene, so fraught with amusement and interest to Genie as well as her son, that the Countess Cluche came softly into the chamber, scarcely pausing for the inevitable "*entrez donc!*" that always followed her little warning tap, before she followed it in presence. She came in with less than her usual composure.

"Genie," she said softly, "M. de Rousillon has called to see you before he goes to Paris to receive the Emperor's verdict, of which, however, he knows the substance already. He is recommended to travel, that is, exiled for two years. Imprisonment for one is the alternative. Of course he will go. The law must be fulfilled else, and it is invariably enforced since the duel of the two members of the Assembly which ended so disastrously last year."

During this somewhat useless tirade, delivered standing, in front of Genie's chair, that not wholly unprepared young person for such a contingency kept her eyes fixed on the ground and her hands folded on her lap, seemingly calm and collected, though she could not prevent the blood from suffusing her delicate cheek—grown pale and thin with grievous vigils.

"I have determined not to see Monsieur de Rousillon again, dear Mademoiselle," Genie answered at last in her repressed tones, ever in her the signs of keenest feeling. "You know," lifting her eyes for the first time to those of her interlocutor, "the promise I made when my boy was taken ill, to live for him alone, if he should be spared, to be guided by his interests and his wishes only. I told you of this as soon as the danger was over, and this is why I cannot see Monsieur de Rousillon until—" She faltered, hesitated—could not proceed for tears.

"You love him, Genie, as well as he loves you. This is throwing away your happiness. None other will ever be so great, believe me, as to marry the man of your heart!"

"Yes, I love him," said Genie, recovering herself with a great effort. "But a curse, so far, has pursued this love. It has made me miserable from its very intensity.

I have risen to my feet now through my boy's illness, and I will not again lose my foothold. I am calm—at peace with my own soul. I was mad, I believe, carried away by my passion, reckless of duty, indifferent to my own child. I will not place myself in this magician's power again to be made the slave of his will whenever he chooses to extend his potent wand. I am free. I will remain so!”

There was something in her voice, her face, her attitude, that convinced the Countess Cluche that this was no whim of the moment, no impulse of coquetry, and she who had suffered so much herself for others, could but admire the strong, sad abnegation of everything beyond the dead level of duty that marked this surrender of self in Genie.

“Could you not grant him the privilege of saying farewell in my presence—one that you would scarcely refuse any neighbor who would solicit it—from common courtesy, from consideration for the usages of society?”

“These are not in question here,” said Genie, mournfully, shaking her lovely head, in that pensive way she had that gave so dreamy an effect to her manner. “Courtesy has no part in this matter. It is one that strikes far deeper—ay, to the life of life. I dare not see Monsieur de Rousillon again. My resolution would be as wax in the sun before his pleadings, and I know what errand brings him here. Let him go now. When this wild current of my river of life has had its way, it will return to its old, tame stagnant flow, and I may meet him safely. Not till then, having vowed my vow.”

She almost whispered these last words, the nucleus of her resolution, so at war with her own inclinations, and



as Marie Minande fully believed, with the happiness and interest of her life.

"Shall I tell him all this?" she asked, still standing before the young, fair being who was casting her treasures in the fire, through the superstition of her maternity. .

"Oh, no—not all—only enough to let him see—that I am guided by as inexorable a fate as that which slew Iphigenia at Aulis! Give him this," and she took from her neck the cross of gold which she always wore concealed in her bosom, "and tell him for my sake to wear it next his heart, with the love of Christ, which he values so little now in his great pride of intellect. It is the only fault I have ever seen in"—she paused a moment, then went on firmly—"in my De Rousillon, yes, mine until I die, whatever may betide. Go now, dear friend," seeing that Madame Rivers hesitated, unable to speak from emotion, yet unwilling to leave her in such a mood, whom she could but regard as fanatical in her self-devotion. "I shall not change my mind, linger as you may, for this determination is the result of a compromise with my Creator, deliberately offered, and I believe accepted."

"Oh, Genie, what infatuation!" burst at last from the lips that had no longer the power to repress remonstrance. "Think of your long, lonely, monotonous life, unshared by any affection save that of a selfish mother—a child who must in a few years leave your side, and to whom you will be thenceforth but a secondary consideration. On the other hand—"

"Lies paradise," interrupted Genie, sadly. "There! I have compassed it all in those few words. Yet it cannot

be. Blame me as you will, I think that he will understand me. Oh, Mademoiselle, I can no more yield my resolution than the fire-surrounded martyr can give up hers, though but to trample on her cross would insure to her life and freedom. It would kill me to be so false to my own convictions."

It was a great blow to De Rousillon; sudden and unexpected; yet he bore it bravely. He had calculated fully on the love of Genie Montrose to cheer his years of exile, and make short the interval of his absence from the land he loved; the land from which he felt no true heart, no firm hand could well be spared, for was not the hour of her trial approaching? Had he not for months marked the increase of the small cloud "no bigger than a man's hand," which loomed on the political horizon of France, and which so few had time or vision to observe? Yet he was banished. At a time, too, when his deepest interests were at stake; because an example was just then needed to stay this evil of duelling, if evil indeed it was, were the privilege properly exercised, which gives a man the right denied by the law to vindicate his honor. Yet not three weeks before he himself had cursed the conventional cruelty of the code he partially defended now. It was just this difficulty of separating the right occasion from the wrong that had made the new law on the subject so stringent, and determined the Emperor to break down all barriers of prejudice in enforcing its penalties. As if any man, temporarily elevated to rule it, could war with the traditions of a nation.

When De Rousillon rode into the court-yard and, flinging his reins to a servant, passed to the front of the

mansion on foot to seek admission, Lionel Blamire was seated at the window of his chamber, which overlooked the space enclosed by the towers of the chateau, with his constant companion, Colonel Kavanaugh, and saw and recognized the visitor.

"There he goes," he said, bitterly, "to call on Genie—untouched by scar or scathe, with his honor vindicated, a hero in her eyes, no doubt—and here am I, maimed for life, worn to a skeleton, and unable to leave my seat. He has the whole field to himself with the additional eclat of having fired in the air (curse his impudence), and you know what women are, Colonel Kavanaugh. I haven't a chance left, and yet you say there is nothing in my theory of fate! I had the choice of weapons according to the French code, and I took old 'sans remords,' that burst in my hand, carried off my middle finger, left the third stiff for life, and tattooed my thumb till it looks as if it belonged to a South Sea Islander.

"'Sans peur' played no such tricks, and the Frenchman got off scot free (no pun intended), but, thank God, we are both young, the world is wide, and I may yet catch up with him."

"Nonsense, Lionel, nonsense! I will countenance no more such folly. I told you my opinion of your conduct from the first. I need not repeat it—but of this be sure, I shall set you down as a lunatic if you pursue this matter any further. What right have you to dictate terms to Genie Montrose? Her hand is her own, to bestow as she chooses. You have no claim."

"And if I haven't, I want to know who has?" broke in Lionel, somewhat fiercely. "Am I not next of kin? Remember Ruth and Boaz. It is a case almost in point.

Have I not been intimate with Montrose and herself for years, besides being a near relative of her father's? and am I not as good as the Frenchman any day, and of better blood—for we go back to Robert Bruce for our ancestors—and it is well known that he is the son of a mechanic!"

"His mother was noble," said Colonel Kavanaugh, dryly, taking snuff. "Have a pinch, Lionel, it will quiet you down."

"I have not learned to take snuff with my left hand yet," said Blamire, mildly, pointing to his wounded right, which, bandaged and helpless, lay on the pillow on the deep stone window-sill. "Thanks to my stars. I suppose—but to resume our subject. I was the very man of all others who would have suited Genie. The estates are contiguous. Her son would have been our neighbor, even when grown and married. I have enough for both, and would have taken good care of her and hers, and loved her with all my soul."

He paused, as if suddenly overcome.

"Very good things in their way, Lionel," said the colonel, tapping his snuff-box softly, "but a woman's fancy! Do you make no allowance for that, my dear Blamire? Her mother came very near going off the handle, you know, about this—ahem!—this artist Count of Mademoiselle Minande, and nothing did restrain her but the maternal sentiment! It is very strong, you know, in these weak, high-strung women! Genie, for instance, a bright creature certainly, but not equal to the wise woman of Tckoah, has made some sort of vow, I understand, to devote herself to that boy of hers exclusively hereafter. She told me this, after she came to

from that strange fainting fit of hers on the day of the duel—and I think she will keep her word”—snuffing prodigiously.

“Her word! Not she! By this time, no doubt, she is engaged to the Frenchman. It does not take long to plight that sort of troth. Good God! how my hand hurts me again! I thought the pain was over.”

“His heart, he means,” mused Colonel Kavanaugh. “Poor fellow, what a cantankerous fool he is to be sure! Love plays strange pranks. This used to be a rational being.”

But he only said, “Dr. La Rue must give you more hasheesh. Shall I send Malcolm to fetch him?”

“No, no; he will be here presently. He divides his time pretty equally of late among the sick at ‘Les Hironnelles.’”

“Miss Constance Lindsay is on the list now, I believe. What do your children do without her?”

“The Countess has them in hand, but I would not let them join the ovation up-stairs to-day. I am sorry for Genie, but I think she has treated me badly. Our children will be foes in consequence, unless she relents.”

“You astonish me, Blamire! A man of your sense to be so unforgiving, so unjust! I cannot see, to save my life, what Genie Montrose has done to offend you or yours. As for Miss Lindsay, her conduct was perfectly inexcusable. I think it is Genie who is maltreated!”

“What did the old cat do to Genie?”

“She rated her soundly as the cause of your injury, your death she feared at the time, and this before many persons. I do not think Genie can get over this!”

“No, and she ought not to get over it without an

apology. Yet there were extenuating circumstances. I shall not interfere in the matter; it is my own private wrong that rankles only. Had I been an inferior she could not have refused me more contemptuously."

"You were too rough, too precipitate, Lionel. Our gentle American women are not taken to wife as Samson chose Delilah. They are wooed patiently, and won after many trials, treated as goddesses by lovers, and queens by husbands. You Britons should never seek to win American wives with your despotic notions."

"I suppose you saw where the despotism lay in Clara's case, Colonel Kavanaugh? You are hardly just to me," said Lionel.

"Hers was an exceptional case, Blamire, and she died in striving for mastery with a nature like yours. The obstinacy of inertia was something she could neither conquer nor understand. Genie is a different woman. She would yield, but lose affection for her tyrant, however mild he seemed; and with her romance and love are one and indivisible. Now you have destroyed the germ of both with your intense commonplace. Had you forbore, heaven knows what might have followed."

"With that fellow in full chase how could I forbear! I had to risk everything or yield the field to him! It takes an old bachelor to talk rubbish about women."

"Speak of the devil and his imps will appear, Lionel," said Colonel Kavanaugh, wisely ignoring the assault on his celibacy, a state he had never ceased to secretly congratulate himself upon, depreciate it who might. "Here comes our Gaul, sadly cut in the comb, if I mistake not, since he entered the salon of 'Les Hirondelles'—his head droops—his features are locked—his walk is sad and un-

certain—he mounts his horse and slowly rides away like one in a deep reverie! Little Genie is as good as her word—she has refused De Rousillon!”

“I’d give a thousand pounds if I could think so,” cried Blamire, starting suddenly to his feet. “I’d go after him and apologize for insinuating that he was an ape and asserting his conduct ungentlemanly, even if Genie Montrose never looked at me. But for that gunsmith’s son to win and wear my heart’s treasure! It can’t be borne, Colonel Kavanaugh; it can’t, indeed. I should have to insult him again.”

“Will you promise me,” said Colonel Kavanaugh, gently, compelling Lionel to reseal himself, “that if I can prove to you that Genie has sent him away without a ray of hope, you will never resume your belligerent attitude with De Rousillon and wait patiently, like a man, for what the future may bring to both; say, Lionel, will you promise?”

“Of course I will, and gladly, and forgive him for wounding my hand in the bargain. Oh, I forgot! it was my own infernal pistol. All the same, though—the consequence of our duel, and as such to be considered.”

“I can’t quite agree with you there, you know, Lionel, since he fired in the air. Just now it was your inauspicious fate. How changeable you are becoming!”

“And what an infernal old tease are you, cousin Kavanaugh! I wish you were yoked for life to Miss Constance, just to punish you both for all past offences. What a pair of paragons the world would see in these married celibates!”

“A truce to your folly,” said Colonel Kavanaugh, coloring to the roots of his wig, which he had resumed of

late from some idea of its comfort or becomingness. "I trod that measure years ago, and we are simply good friends now—but you must not bandy venerated names so lightly. Miss Constance might be offended; as for me, I should be proud of the connection."

That these words fell on fertile soil and bore good fruit, the end of this tale may show. At the time they were uttered they meant no more than the idle wind—the mistral blowing keenly through the chamber on that hot August day, with its subtle under-current of chillness.

Dr. La Rue placed Lionel under the influence of an opiate that night, so restless was his condition, and warned him of the danger of excitement in his case, but the news Colonel Kavanaugh brought him on the following day, direct from head-quarters, did more than morphine to calm his brain and quiet his pulse.

The "Countess Cluche" had told him of her several interviews with Genie and De Rousillon, of the determination of the one not to be shaken by any persuasion of hers and the discomfiture of the other, to relieve which no reasonable hope could be offered. They were on the same platform now; the favored lover and discarded suitor, and Blamire slept the sleep of the righteous in view of the similarity of their situations.

"She will never be his," he thought, "whether I get her or not; and there is consolation in that thought. She will go back to Rookhurst, and I will serve for her, as Jacob did for Rebecca, seven years, if it be needful, and wait patiently; but that Gaul must never set foot in Scotland, or 'his blood shall dye the heather.'"

After this communication Blamire got well rapidly,



and a few days later found himself in the drawing-room, whence he sent up his card to Genie.

It was returned with a few pencilled words on the back, declining to receive him then or thenceforth; their acquaintance was ended for life, as she asserted. But, although somewhat discouraged by this proceeding, Blamire by no means despaired of future conciliation, and even success.

Such was the indomitable pluck of this thick-headed son of the thistle!

A few days later saw Genie on her way to Switzerland to join her mother at Geneva, under the escort of Colonel Kavanaugh. Her boy gathered health visibly as they proceeded northward, and the faint rose-tinge that had always distinguished her beauty came back to his mother's cheek. So that, when they reached their destination, Mrs. Ravenshaw could scarcely realize that her children had been ill and suffering.

She herself was radiant with health, and all unconscious of the cruel trial to which she was soon to be subjected—only held in abeyance until the arrival of Colonel Kavanaugh, who was already in the secret of the threatened calamity—the determination of Major Ravenshaw no longer to let his sword rust in its sheath when the voice of his country was calling him. "Maryland, my Maryland," rang through his heart by night and day. He lost his strength, his appetite, and grew irritable and capricious. Mrs. Ravenshaw feared that his brain was softening, when he brought her a paper to sign her dower-right in one of his silver mines, from which he had received his chief revenue up to that time.

He was about to sell it to an English speculator for

less than one-third of its value, payable in British stocks.

"They can't confiscate that, you know, my dear," he had said in extenuation of his act, "and it will always be a certainty for you and the children, in case anything happens to me. I might be killed, you know."

"So might any one," urged Mrs. Ravenshaw; "but even in that case, wouldn't the silver mine be better than the stocks, yielding but three per cent. for your wife and children? Remember, I object to this proceeding, but, of course, I will sign away my dower, as the property is yours. Were it mine, no power could induce me to do so."

"Were it yours no request of the kind would be made, my dear Isabella; but the results of the sale will be for your use alone, and registered in your name. I may fall, you know."

"I thought you said you had plenty of money in bank for two years' support, and that no neutral property should suffer during the war? Besides, in California, all is calm; scarcely a ripple of the rebellion reaches that distant State, where we should have gone in the beginning, instead of coming here to be cut off from our resources."

"It might have been better, but as it is, here we shall stay; you and the children at least, and Genie. I may have to return to look after our interests, and who knows what might happen during my absence? You will now be placed above want, in any case. There is such a thing as shipwreck."

The day after Colonel Kavanaugh's return all was explained, and Mrs. Ravenshaw wondered at her own

blindness. The South was beginning to lose her early laurels. Battle after battle was going against her, and Major Ravenshaw, who had soothed his spirits with hopes of her success during the brief period of her triumph and his inertia, could not bear to be absent from her side in the time of peril and disaster.

Vain were the remonstrances of his friends—vain the tears and prayers of his wife—vain the affectionate forebodings of Genie Montrose, whom he loved as his own daughter! Placing his family under the charge of their early guardian, and committing the issue of his act to God, he went where his conscience rather than inclination called him, and putting the sea between himself and his earthly treasures, he hastened to Richmond to offer his sword and services to President Davis.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Journeys end in lovers' meetings,  
Every true man's son doth know.—SHAKESPEARE.

THE American war had closed as suddenly as the lids of the Book of Life are shut on its contents by the preacher who has read his allotted chapter in the pulpit, as a star shoots from the upper world to fall in meteoric ashes on the earth or to descend in the figure, as a candle expires that has long flickered in its socket.

People were astonished when the end came, though they knew the end was coming, and the black seal of tragedy was set on the marvellous scroll of the history of

that day by the assassination of Lincoln. Circumstance after circumstance followed this catastrophe, each in its way as romantic and impressive. Dark suspicions of complicity with crime shadowed the ascension to the presidential throne of Andrew Johnson, the Tarquin of Republican kings. Nor were these lessened in observing minds by the unjust holocaust of Mrs. Surratt.

It was during the lull that succeeds a tempest ever—whether material or spiritual—that Mrs. Ravenshaw and Genie, accompanied by their boys, returned after a three years sojourn in Europe, to dwell again at Birk-braes, and there meet for the first time since their separation in Europe the wounded confederate officer whom circumstances had established as its master.

They came to their old home under the escort of Ruffin Thermor, his younger brother having married abroad. Owing to the trusteeship of Colonel Kavanaugh (neutral in politics as far as his outward manifestations went) the property came under no act of confiscation, and as the soil of Maryland had never been invaded by a hostile army, and the negroes who had lived on the estate continued to reside there and cultivate its fields (though emancipated by law), the owners of Birk-braes found it still in habitable order, and very little changed.

Rena and Juba had gone to Europe with their masters, and had escaped the contaminating influences of early freedom, which seemed to Southern negroes to mean much more than it really did, and deluded them with the hope of agrarianism.

They came back with a hearty contempt for the new order of things, which embraced retrenchment in every shape, and with a perfect indifference to the wages

so eagerly craved by their brethren—poor substitutes for unlimited generosity in the case of those especial favorites.

Major Ravenshaw was sadly altered by his warlike experiences, and more than all by his bitter term of imprisonment at Fort M——, where it became a matter of regret, it may be remembered, when rats were exterminated by an over-demand for these delicacies. The wound had never healed kindly and he halted in his gait from its effects, sustaining himself on his famous sword-cane with a melancholy and knightly grace that was extremely touching in the eyes of his devoted wife and step-daughter.

He had distinguished himself by the gallantry and impetuosity of his charges in several battles at the head of the foreign regiment he had enlisted, equipped at his own cost, and brought with him from Europe.

Most of his men had been killed or had died in prison, but the few that remained were so far quartered on him at Birk-braes, or settled at his own expense in Sand-piper.

Three years had wrought great changes in the once peaceful and prosperous "Bay settlement." Some of the families who had resided there had drifted away after the loss of relatives, and the emancipation of slaves. Old landmarks seemed effaced, and radicalism ruled the hour.

Dr. Mandamus had espoused the widow of one of his friends slain in battle, chiefly to have the privilege of supporting her in her deep poverty with her infant family, and was happy in spite of his sacrifice. Another determined celebrator of our acquaintance had become a benedict in a distant land.

Colonel Kavanaugh had married Miss Constance Lindsay, and her "British stocks," about one year previous to the return of the Ravenshaws, and Genie, at a nominal price—glad to be able to so oblige her guardian—had leased to him Rookhurst during the minority of her son.

This lovely place met every requisition of his fancy, and as Miss Lindsay was devoted to Scotland, he determined to pass the remnant of his days in the land of his forefathers. The marriage had taken place at Blamire Hall, just before the death of Major Stanley, whose heart-broken widow, with her little six year old daughter, had in consequence of this bereavement gone back to the home of her childhood.

The brother and sister were again reunited and all-in-all to each other as they had been in their orphaned youth, and Lionel's boys became the charge of Rose Blamire, as did her "Lily" grow to be the idol of her uncle Lionel—on the whole a sad and hopeless contentment had come to be the lot of these young people who began life with such fervent aspirations. Duty and religion sustained them on their paths of daily domestic effort and monotonous occupation, and perhaps in the end they were as happy as the average men and women of the world; but something was wanting to make their lives complete—that came no more to either—that will never come!

Coriander had followed the fortunes of Colonel Kavanaugh up to the time of his marriage, but one season's experience of Scotland determined him to return to Maryland. The British servants that were assembled in readiness for the happy pair at Rookhurst (the same that had

served Mr. and Mrs. Montrose) were to his sensitive Ethiopian tastes objects of unmitigated contempt and disgust. His oriental salaams and hand-waves were thrown away on these outside barbarians, or turned into coarse ridicule by beings who did everything by rule and behaved like automatons. That exquisite knack he had of bearing a dish, like a caryatide, on the tips of his fingers, far above his head, to be deposited with graceful reverences before his masters, made him an object of mockery in the Scottish pantry. Then he could not bear the "burr" in their speech, from which his sensitive ear recoiled; nor the bagpipes, introduced of evenings in the servants' hall; nor the bread and cheese and beer that constituted so large a portion of each repast—he, who had been accustomed to the daintiest dishes of Mrs. Thermor's cuisine! His very refinement made him wretched, and he determined to carry out a long-cherished idea of "saloon-keeping" that had pursued him for years, as the consequence of his master's death and his own promised legacy of freedom and one thousand dollars, in case of such a catastrophe.

He compromised with Colonel Kavanaugh for five hundred dollars down, and to the infinite relief of "Miss Constance," to whom his tyranny was well known, he left Rookhurst forever. The accounts he gave of Scottish housekeeping elicited groans and ejaculations from his sable friends at Birk-braes, to whom he appeared from his own representations in the light of a gastronomic martyr! They could scarcely believe that a people could exist, and call themselves civilized, to whom Indian corn, with its adjunct of hominy, and sweet potatoes, and lima beans, and egg-plants were unknown; who raise tomatoes

and peaches under glass, and never had no "cowcumbers, water-millions, nor pumpkins!"

"Wat does dey eat den, bruder Coriander?" asked the fat old cook Sabra, pausing before him on her way to the stove with a peach-cobbler in a huge pan, intended for the servants' dinner.

"Oat-meal porridge for one thing, and sheep soup for another, and wild meat and cold bread, and marmalade for breakfast, and all such like trash; and no vegetables in their gardens that a gentleman would put on his table in this country. Turnips and beets and carrots and that sort of stuff, and apples that we would pitch out of a picked-over barrel for the pigs, and the meanest pears. Good Lord!"

An universal groan made a chorus to the latter exclamation, then there was a pause.

"No wonder dere ain't no colored people out dere! How dey git dere work done?"

"Dey has to put up with their own folks—dere poor kin (dey calls themselves, you see, all by one name), and dere manners is ob de poorest. Dey hasn't sense enough to know a genplemanly culled pusson wen dey sees him! Some ob dem fools took me fur a wild Ingun, and pretended to be skeared when I come near 'em! I pities de Colonel, from my heart, I does! He will never see a spring chicken, nor a buckwheat, nor rice cake again, nor a soft waffle, in his born days! Dey 'lows it's wasteful to kill young chickens, and onhealthy to eat hot cakes, and Miss Lindsay, she gives in to all dere fool noshins. It will be the def of my old massey—ahem! *boss* I mean!"

"Well, honey, we'se all born to die!" exclaimed Sabra. "He done mity well by you any way, brudder Coriander



—gibbin' you dat pile ob money ! Five hundred dollars ! I never seed so much as that at one time in all my born days. Is it all in silver an' gole?"

"Wat! wid heaps of Yankees about here? Don't you all know Coriander Kavanaugh better dan dat? I was constructed how to draw my money on paper by de Colonel hisself from de treasury at Washington!"

"Hebben bless de boy! Dis comes, chillen, ob trabelin' in foreign countries! Well! well." And, with a deep sigh of mingled envy and approbation, aunt Sabra proceeded on her way to bake her pies, and broke up the caucus.

It must not be supposed that either of Genie's lovers had abandoned hope, or the pursuit of their object, during the interval between the duel at "Les Hirondelles" and her return to the United States.

Several were the efforts Lionel had made to obtain an interview, though always without success. He had followed her to Switzerland, to Rome, to Vienna, all in vain; and written volumes that were never answered. Against Blamire Genie cherished a deeply-seated aversion, founded on the injustice of his behavior to De Rousillon, and the indelicacy with which he had dragged her name into publicity by his open avowals of his motive for insulting and meeting his opponent. After his sister's bereavement, Lionel Blamire desisted from what had become through circumstances a persecution rather than courtship, and merged thereafter as far as he could his own feelings in the sorrows of Rose and her daughter.

The marriage of Miss Constance Lindsay with Colonel Kavanaugh gave him neighbors that greatly aided to

console his sorrows and interest him in social life again; and the determination of Genie to revisit Scotland no more during her son's minority cut off all hope of subsequent success in that quarter.

Blamire was quieted, and the fever in his blood died gradually away. He resigned himself to the mild substitution of a sister's affection for the fuller conjugal life. To him no second passion was possible.

De Rousillon had from time to time written to Genie letters in which the passing reader might have described only the influence of sincere and dispassionate friendship, though through them ran a subtle undercurrent of deeper feeling. To these letters Genie had sent, at intervals, discreet and appropriate answers, not one word of which gave the remotest insight into the heart of the writer.

From this correspondence she had learned that the first year of De Rousillon's exile had been divided between Russia and England in the study and close observation of the institutions of those great nations. During the early part of the second year, he had gone for similar reasons to Italy, been accidentally invited to "Miramar," and involved in some almost inexplicable way in the fortunes of Maximilian, with whom he had gone to Mexico.

It was one of those instances of strong personal affinity or fascination which usually terminate in coalition of some sort. With persons of opposite sexes, in liaisons or marriages; with those of the same sex, in romantic and devoted friendships. The boyish, confiding nature of Maximilian found strength and refuge in the cool, calm disinterestedness of De Rousillon, who vainly

dissuaded him, however, from the step that wrecked his fortunes.

It was a case of sheer infatuation. The magnetism of Napoleon, more potent than his own, had possession of the prince, and, as he could not avert his doom, De Rousillon determined to share it with him, and at least endeavor to ameliorate its fatality.

These men had met as boys at a public school in Germany, and knew each other's qualities, as those only who commence life together can know the true nature of mutual souls. There was something in this Mexican enterprise that enlisted all the romance of both, and had it not been for his intimate knowledge of the Emperor's character, De Rousillon might have been as confident of success as Maximilian. As it was he mistrusted the affair from the beginning. But life to him possessed at the time no serious interest or especial purpose, and misfortune in his case meant only loss of time and money. For Maximilian there remained as resources the inalienable estate of his wife, and Miramar as a refuge for disappointed ambition—a paradise that might almost reconcile him, De Rousillon thought, to Mexican repudiation. For nothing more dire than this condition of things ever loomed before the imagination of either. The time was over for bloody retaliation—both thought—and the lids of history had closed forever on the fate of Iturbide—or its possible repetition.

"We may be coming back in a few years, poorer than we went," said Maximilian, in answer to his friend's remonstrances. "In the meantime, the Emperor's strong hand will sustain us in our position—however untenable it may prove ultimately. To found a new empire is

surely worth an effort, and if I succeed, De Rousillon, high honors await my friends."

Apart from its results, enterprise is in itself attractive and life-giving to all fresh, energetic, and active natures. A new existence opened before these young and energetic men and those who shared their views, and armed with all high intentions and resolutions they set sail for the lovely land of Montezuma.

One year's sojourn in Mexico had convinced De Rousillon of what he feared from the first—the pusillanimity of the Emperor; and his last letter to Genie announced his intention of returning to France (his term of exile being completed) as a private envoy from Maximilian to solicit aid from Napoleon. It was a desperate alternative, and failure was the consequence.

De Rousillon, after a long interview with "the gray-eyed man of fate," left him convinced of two things—one that he was an unmitigated scoundrel, a gambler, spending the resources of the nation, his wealthy bride, in order to gratify his own tastes and passions alone, while he deceived her into the belief in his powers and capacity by gifts from her own half-exhausted coffers; another, that he was a shallow conjurer and coward, afraid of the spirits his own wand had raised from the vasty deep.

"No blood of the Corsican flows in his stagnant veins," muttered De Rousillon, as he left the Imperial presence. "He is an impostor in the sight of God and man, and his own acts will yet proclaim him so, veil them now as he may, under a mantle of fraud and dissimulation. Oh! my country, dearer than life to me, would I could aid thee to shake off this incubus."

A closer insight into the Mexican nature convinced De Rousillon that in case of Maximilian's failure to hold his throne, and the triumph of Juarez, measures unknown to European powers might be resorted to in that half-civilized land—imprisonment in mines for life, or general massacre.

These convictions had he feelingly represented to Louis Napoleon, without eliciting from him one word or glance of sympathy. The Emperor was too politic to avow his powerlessness to sustain the victim of his own rapacity in the false position he had assigned him, and in placing his refusal on the ground of expediency alone he outraged every feeling of De Rousillon's nature. A stormy scene was the consequence, which ended with a cold but polite request on the part of the sovereign that his subject might prolong his exile indefinitely, commanding him in furtherance of this plan to sell his estates and bear away the results of such sudden sales, on pain of confiscation.

"My estates will remain intact when yours are gone," said De Rousillon defiantly as they parted. Hastening to the bank he drew out all of his available funds, but made no effort, then or thereafter, to dispose of his real estate, which he abandoned to its fate.

A man in authority, whom he had served signally, came to him at midnight at his hotel to apprise him that an order would be issued the next day for his arrest. "In which case," he added, "you will form one of the island colony, De Rousillon, the Emperor is so fond of increasing lately."

Before the dawn of the next day, yet not a moment too soon to avoid the officers in pursuit of him, De Rousillon had left Paris for Marseilles, where his mother suc-

ceeded in concealing him until the search was abandoned as hopeless; and in the guise of a sailor, by connivance with the captain, he left France for the port of New York in a merchant vessel. He had another mission to fulfil for Maximilian that took him to Washington, whither he proceeded immediately on his arrival in the United States; a mission that proved as fruitless as the first, but the chief magnet that drew him to America was Genie Montrose. This he acknowledged to himself, on the way over, for from the first he had been hopeless of aid from Andrew Johnson, and had he acted judiciously he felt that he would have avoided rather than sought his countenance; that Janus face, that beamed alike on two opposing parties, assisting neither.

He did not announce his advent to Genie, fearing that the old superstition might still be paramount, and that she might consider it due to her hasty vow to refuse him an interview. Having made himself acquainted by report with the vicinity, and possessing an excellent "eye for country," he landed at "Sand-piper" in the little "Blue-wing" packet that still plied its old trade between Baltimore and the Bay settlement, and took lodgings in the hostelry, rather than hotel, of that village.

It was here that M. Rochambeau, the Rosolio of our story, had once awaited the motions of "the Countess Cluche" in that strange escapade of hers, which ended so fortunately for all concerned. Dr. Mandamus from his gig noticed the handsome stranger *en passant* as he paced the beach abstractedly, and formed his own conclusions.

"Some army friend of Major Ravenshaw," he thought, "perhaps one of the Orleans princes. He certainly has

a very distinguished air, and is evidently a foreigner—or, who knows, may be one of Genie's French lovers. Her mother tells me she might have had a score."

This conjecture was somewhat strengthened when the stranger courteously waved his hand to the occupant of the buggy, which happened to be going just then at snail's pace, and which was checked at once in obedience to his signal.

"Can you tell me," asked De Rousillon, removing his hat and bowing respectfully, yet somewhat as if the respect was more for himself than the object of his salutation, "the shortest way for a foot-passenger to the residence of Madame Ravenshaw? I desire to call on the family."

"Just get in with me then," said the doctor cordially. "I am on my way to see Major Ravenshaw, who is more or less out of health just now, owing to his wound. It is a long walk through the sun, cut it off as you may."

Without hesitation the offer was accepted, and before his arrival at Birk-braes the stranger had possessed himself of the fact he principally wished to master—"Genie was at home, well and almost a recluse, such was her devotion to her boy," the doctor added.

"And here he is, with his nurse, the little scamp, busy gathering late blackberries, and as usual, bareheaded in spite of care and counsel."

The child was a picture of half-infantile, half-boyish strength and beauty as he stood before them, for the doctor drew up his horse to stoop and pat his golden head.

"Where is his hat, Maggie?" he asked; "you know how particular his mother is that he should keep his

head covered, and my directions." He was interrupted by the nurse.

"He threw it in the burn as we passed by, and before I could take notice, I picked it up, and here it is, as limp as wet paper," lifting the dripping straw flat before the physician's eyes.

"It's himself that is always playing the sly tricks."

"A difficult colt to rein, hey, Maggie? Get up, you bareheaded barbarian, and let me take you home to your mother; but who are you staring at so earnestly?"

"My papa!" cried the child, eagerly stretching out his arms to De Rousillon. "My dear papa, come from the 'Rondelles to make me another windmill! Yes, you are my papa!" clinging closely to De Rousillon; "you told me so one day when my mamma wasn't there. My papa come back from heaven to stay with us."

"You have known the child before?" said the doctor, maliciously; "that is certain; yet what a memory he seems to have."

"For reasons of my own," said De Rousillon, smiling, yet not without embarrassment, "I at one time conciliated this child, with no little pains and interest as to the result. It was his odd fancy to consider himself injured because he had no father like other boys of his acquaintance; and on one occasion I gravely proposed that he should adopt me without any assurance of the kind he affixed, however; though certainly I did fall from heaven about that time."

No further explanation was afforded the inquisitive, or rather interested, doctor, keenly alive to all that concerned Genie and her mother. But the child prattled on about his panoramic glimpses of the past—now



vividly recalled by the presence of one he had known and loved at "Les Hirondelles."

As they approached the gate of entrance, two noble St. Bernard dogs bounded to meet the buggy, with manifestations of delight. Seeing the doctor about to dismount to unfasten the staples that held the iron lever of the portal together, and excluded four-footed intruders, De Rousillon sprang to the ground to anticipate him.

"As yours is a professional call, I will not impose my company on you further, Dr. Mandamus (for such, I believe, was the name by which our little friend accosted you), but, taking him by the hand, walk to the door of entrance, whence he can be my ambassador to the powers within! I own I am not quite certain of my reception!" he added, while a boyish glow overspread his fine features and clear cheek and forehead. Then, before the doctor could remonstrate, with a bow and murmur of "thanks," he turned into the serpentine path that formed the footway to the front entrance of Birk-braes, leaving the buggy to pursue the circular road; the boy springing after him, caught the hand that was stretched out behind for him to grasp, and Maggie in the distance, breathless from her effort to overtake the buggy, saw them vanish through the shrubbery together.

The dogs had from the first bounded in front of the visitor and his little charge, as if to lead the way, and De Rousillon could but feel it a good omen that they had met him in so friendly a spirit. "The Roman augurs judged of the prosperity of a deed from the flight of crows," he reasoned; "why not a modern soothsayer from the greetings of dogs?" Let me here assure my reader that De Rousillon spoke English with the rare

perfection and still slight accent of a highly-educated foreigner, both of which lend an unidiomate and individual grace to the language that possesses a rare charm for the ear of culture—a charm altogether indescribable.

“We are most there,” said the child, “and I am so glad Maggy did not catch up to us, with the wet hat. My mamma always puts up her hand to her eyes when I don’t mind her, and it makes me feel so bad—badder than when my auntie scolds me!”

“Who is your auntie, my boy? Your uncle Ruffin’s wife? I heard he was to be married soon to a lady living near Birk-braes. It seems that I am not in time for the wedding, then?”

“Oh, no! Major Ravenshaw’s wife—that is my auntie—and I have two little bits of uncles, too, her sons. Oh, they plague me so!” with a deep sigh of infant martyrdom. “I wish, I wish I was at the ’Rondelles again with you and Mazon and Marie! Don’t you ’member that kite you made me shaped like an eagle bird? Can you make me another and a windmill? Oh! there is my mamma waiting for me, walking on the umbra!” and without waiting for an answer to his questions, the child, detaching his hand hastily from that of his companion, darted toward his mother, who stood gazing from the balustrade in an opposite direction, and who had not observed his approach, with the joyous cry:

“My papa has come, what we left at the ’Rondelles! My papa has come back from heaven again. Come and see him, mamma!”

De Rousillon, who had followed the lead of the boy, had, with the habitual grace of high breeding, taken off his hat, half unconsciously, as he found himself in a

lady's presence, but he was the veriest coward that day. He advanced with a blanched cheek and beating heart. Emotion held him speechless, and his nerveless hand forgot to do its duty as it never had done in the thickest of the fight.

As Genie turned on him her soulful eyes, the sombrero dropped from his hand, and he stood rooted to the floor of the umbra.

With a little shriek, she fled toward him, paused, folded her hands upon her bosom, extended them again, clasped them once more together, and stood with her eyes riveted on the tessellated pavement, waiting for him to approach.

Fresh courage possessed him, all of his old impetuosity returned to his support, and in another moment he held her in his arms.

"Genie!" "De Rousillon!"—and this was all that told the story of their tried and faithful love.

The child stood apart, wondering, yet convinced that now, indeed, his papa was restored to him, and came at last to add his caresses to their own. It was a brief love-scene, but very conclusive.

Little remains to be told.

The opening scene of this story occurred on the "umbra"—the last act closes there—of Genie's melodrama.

She was married a few weeks later, at the same time that her brother espoused her friend, to the man of her heart, who was, however, by his sense of loyalty, compelled to return for a season to the service of Maximilian. In the uncertain condition of Mexico he would not hazard the presence of Genie and her son, from whom

she refused to be separated. He had, too, his misgivings about Napoleon's intentions with regard to his own person, and time proved the correctness of this estimate.

Maximilian's refusal to surrender De Rousillon, in compliance with his demand, incensed the French Emperor, and added to the trials of the unfortunate Prince he had led into a snare, to be abandoned to the mercy of his foes. Matters were rapidly culminating in Mexico. The unfortunate Empress was sent away by the advice of those who foresaw the end, and her reason was the price of her bitter disappointment and fruitless errand to the marble Emperor, which formed the ostensible motive of her voyage.

With the heroic self-abnegation, peculiar to her organization, Genie saw and approved the course her husband was pursuing. His honor was as dear to her as her own life, and she knew that it was at stake when the question became one of truth and fidelity—opposed to safety and perfidy.

To the last moment of that awful tragedy De Rousillon held his post near the person of Maximilian, and craved no better fate than that of his Emperor. For a few weeks of unutterable anguish after the death of Maximilian had been made known throughout the land, Genie remained under the terrible apprehension that her husband had shared his doom.

At last he wrote to her from the prison in which, with other faithful adherents of the Emperor, he had been cast by Juarez, and implored her to be calm, and to prepare herself for any event that might occur. He had abandoned hope and yet refrained from telling her this, conjuring her to patience and to prayer, for in that ter-

rible mine-immurement, shut out from the light of day and the face of civilized man, a divine ray had penetrated to the depths of his soul, and the jewel of faith shone resplendent through the gloom.

Suddenly released at last with the few companions of his imprisonment who survived the hardships of their condition, he came at once to Birk-braes, and in person relieved the preying anxiety of his wife.

Imagination only can depict that meeting. He recuperated rapidly in that atmosphere of perfect happiness, and won golden opinions from all who came to know him and understand his high nature.

His mother in the interval had died, and a portion of her large fortune was remitted to him by his brothers, to whom the whole had been awarded by the crown, as he was an exile attainted with treason, or rather, if the truth had been told, simply with "lese majeste."

After a brief residence in Baltimore, which he selected as his temporary home, the news of Napoleon's declaration of war against Germany reached the United States, and in rapid succession came reports of the movements of the French army, its defeat, and the Emperor's capture.

In consequence of this last event, De Rousillon returned to France, taking Genie with him at her earnest solicitation. Until matters should be decided he placed her with her son, almost his own by the ties of affection and duty, in the hands of their friends at Les Hironnelles.

Through all the stormy periods that succeeded the downfall of the Empire, De Rousillon remained chiefly in Paris, aiding by his coolness, his wisdom, and his

courage, the counsels of those who sustained France through her hour of trial.

He was present at the capital during all the horrors of the German siege, and gave freely from his treasures to aid his suffering country. He is rewarded by the universal reverence which his name inspires wherever it is spoken.

Asking nothing for himself, and having reserved little more than a competency for his family, he has returned to reside at "Les Bocages," where with his true helpmate and their children he passes a rational, contented, and exalted life.

THE END.



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